

# PLUCK AND LUCK

## THE GOLD QUEEN OR TWO YANKEE BOYS IN NEVER NEVER LAND AND OTHER STORIES

By Howard Austin



Meanwhile Harry and Joe were hard at work, and they had already sent a large number of the logs into the abyss. "Slow work!" "Well, yes, Joe, it is, and if those fellows make a rush, where are we?"



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## THE GOLD QUEEN

### OR, TWO YANKEE BOYS IN NEVER NEVER LAND

(By HOWARD AUSTIN

#### CHAPTER I.—Joe Rice's Plan—Departure of the Two Boys.

"He'll never be heard of again, Joe."

"So you've told me fifty times, and fifty times I've disagreed with you."

"But it's true."

"Rats! Anyway, it's a chestnut, and I'd like any other remark for a change. You've a face a yard long. Shall I tell you what you look like?"

"If you want to."

"The picture of misery, Harry. You look as if you'd been hired to conduct your own funeral, and weren't sure of being paid for the job."

Harry Hope passed his hand over his brow and through his fair, curly hair as if a sense of oppression was upon him, and despite his chum's advice the old gloomy look came back to his handsome face. Truly, there was good reason for his fit of despondency. A year before he and Joe Rice, his cousin, then aged fifteen, had left America, their native land, and had gone to Melbourne, in Australia, where their uncle, the brother of each of their mothers, lived.

David Dixon, the relative in question, was a widower and had no children. He was considered to be a very wealthy man, a wholesale wool merchant, and his intention was that the two boys should eventually succeed him. One day a financial panic came. Numbers of American houses failed, among them that of David Dixon. The old man's ruin was complete, but he paid every creditor in full, though it took all he had in the world to do so. Then he disappeared. Where he had gone no one knew, for he gave no hint of his intended departure. It was the universal opinion that his failure had driven him to suicide, and Harry Hope took the same view of the case. It was a month after their uncle's disappearance, when the two boys sat talking in the room they shared together in the boarding-house where they lived.

"See here, Harry," said Joe, after a pause, "let's come to some decision."

"I'm listening."

"We've done everything possible. We've spent a month in searching for Uncle Dave, and the police haven't been idle, either."

"I know that."

"Well, to live one must work, and we've done nothing the last month."

"Except to spend a good part of our small stock, Joe."

"We must call a halt, old chap, before it all goes."

"You're right," said Harry sadly, rising as he spoke and walking up and down the room. "There's only one thing to be done."

"What is it?"

"Take the next steamer for San Francisco. Let's do it while we have enough money to pay our passages."

"It won't do."

"Won't do? Do you mean to stay here?"

"Yes; this bird intends to roost in Australia."

"To search for Uncle Dave?"

"No; to make my fortune."

"Ah! then you don't mean to stay and make your fortune in Melbourne?"

"Guess that's meant for sarcasm. If it is, it's a worse failure than my jokes. In America when a young fellow wanted to get on, they used to say, 'Go West, young man, go West.' Well, I'm going to West Australia, or Westralia, as they call it now."

"To Coolgardie, to dig for gold?"

"To get it anyway."

"Pshaw! Coolgardie's overdone. There isn't a claim with an ounce of gold in it but what's taken up."

Joe Rice jumped up excitedly.

"Look here, Harry, I've put my foot down. There's no mistake about it."

"There oughtn't to be, it's big enough."

"Bah! What! Do you think I'm going back to America?"

"I certainly thought so."

"Not on your life. We left there exactly a year ago, and by jingo! What yarns we told all the boys before we started. 'We were going to Australia to get a fortune.' 'We'd be back in a few years rolling in money.'"

"So we would, if——"

Joe Rice laughed contemptuously.

"I'll just tell you my programme," he said, "if you care to know it."

"Tell it, by all means."

"Tomorrow I take the steamer to Albany in West Australia."

"And then?"

"I'll buy a horse there, and also fit out for my trip."



"Then you don't mean to settle in Albany?"

"I'll stay there about a day. Having fitted out, I'll start up country, and strike out north, perhaps going a little toward the west. I'll do my own prospecting; who knows, I may find gold. Anyway, I mean to try."

"You're crazy. Once in the bush you'll starve."

"Anyway," said Joe, looking hard at his chum, "I'm not afraid to risk it."

Joe said this with a strong accent on the "afraid," and instantly a flush came over Harry's face.

"See here, Joe. No one dares me to do a thing. If it meant certain death I'd go now, after what you said. Let's go round and take our passages and have a last look at the city. Tomorrow we'll start on the journey that means leaving our bones in the bush."

"That remains to be seen. Be as gloomy as you like, Harry, you can't make me feel sad."

The next day they started for Albany, which they reached on the fifth day after leaving Melbourne.

## CHAPTER II.—In the Bush—The Meeting With the Hatter.

At Albany the boys were advised on all hands to abandon their project. Everybody said that it meant certain death. This talk had no effect on either of the two Yankee boys. Joe Rice would not change his purpose because it was he who had first suggested the adventure, and Harry's pride was aroused by the dangers that were held out before him for the purpose of convincing him of his foolishness. The fitting-out took little time. Each of the boys had a rifle and a six-shooter, which he had brought from America with him. Two saddle-horses were purchased and a pack-horse to carry the stores. And so the boys started, feeling, now they were on the way, all that light-heartedness that had been theirs before misfortune had come to them and their Uncle Dave. Soon they lost track of civilization. When they were a week out from Albany, they went for two days without seeing a human being. The stations, as the farms are called in Australia, had been all left behind, and of course there was no sign of cultivation anywhere.

"Are you sorry you came now, Harry?" asked Joe, as they rode slowly along through a country where vegetation was plentiful.

"Sorry! Why, it's great!"

"Beats office work, eh?"

"Out of sight!"

The day went on, and so did the boys, and as they traveled an alteration took place in their spirits. They were not nearly so cheerful as they had been.

"Say, Joe."

"Well?"

"We can't last much longer."

"Just as long as our water lasts, that's all."

"Look at the horses, Joe."

"Poor things! They're on their last legs."

"How much water is left?"

"We can last till tomorrow, that's all."

That night they used the last drop of water they had with them. Not a wink did they get, for they sat round the fire they had made and discussed their prospects. But the morning made things look worse. Two of the horses, the saddle-

horses, lay dying. The third, the pack-horse, was in better shape. Harry led the pack-horse, and he and Joe trudged wearily along. Hour after hour they journeyed, traversing a country brown with drought. Nothing green was to be seen, a few dry bushes here and there, and the boys suffered from a burning thirst which was maddening. When evening came they lay down, dozing a little, but for the most part feeling themselves unable to sleep. To remain was to die. So long as their legs would carry them they must journey on, in the hope of finding water. The horse staggered along blindly, its tongue hanging out, and its eyes fiery red. All at once it sank in the sand quite worn out.

"The end!" gasped Harry, reeling, too, and clutching at Joe for support.

"Never say die, old chap. The tide will turn."

"We'll be dead before it does."

Harry sank down by the horse. Joe gave a wild shout.

"Smoke!" he cried.

"Smoke!"

"Yes; and where there's smoke there's fire!"

"And where there's fire there's people."

The boys walked rapidly toward some gum trees, beneath which a thin wreath of smoke was rising.

"Got your rifle ready?" said Joe.

"Why?"

"Because, if there are only a few blacks we can make a fight for it."

They were now near enough to see a black man bending over the fire, and he seemed to be alone there. This emboldened the boys, and they hurried themselves to get near him. Suddenly he turned his head, and seeing the boys, he gave a loud shout. Joe covered him instantly with his rifle, and as he did so, a tall figure sprang up near the fire.

"Drop that gun, youngster," he cried, "and come and join me."

The boys were delighted to meet with a white man, and they lost no time in accepting his invitation. As soon as they reached the fire, they saw a water-hole half-full of water beneath the gum tree. They both made a wild rush at it. The stranger seized them and held them back.

"Put some water in the billy, Jacky," he said, speaking to the black. "Now, you go slow. That's enough for you for the present; let your pal have a drink."

"Boil the billy, Jacky. I'll brew some tea for you, lads. That'll put you right."

"Let me drink," cried Harry.

"You'll get as drunk as an owl if you do. I know what I'm talking about. I've been in the same street myself more than once. Strange thing, lads, but water, mind you, makes you drunk when you're dying of thirst."

The billy was a tin pail, used in the bush for a variety of purposes, but more especially for making the fragrant beverage—tea. Jack had it boiling in a few minutes, and after the two boys had emptied it they felt all their strength return.

"Now we'll talk," said the stranger. "Reckon you'd better spin your yarn."

"Our yarn?"

"Thunder! but you must have a pretty lively one to tell. You're in the Spinifex desert now, and a walk across that isn't taken every day."

"But we didn't walk. We rode till yesterday, when our horses died," said Joe.



"And your stores. What of them?"

"On a pack-horse. He dropped just as we saw you."

"What! A minute or two ago?"

"Yes."

The stranger jumped up, throwing his pipe aside in his hurry, and instantly he filled two billies with water.

"If he's not dead I may save him, I reckon. No; stay where you are. Rest; I'll carry this thing through."

The two boys lay down and occupied themselves in watching Jacky, the black man, who was apparently preparing a meal. It was not long before they saw the stranger returning, and behind him walked the horse.

"He's none the worse," said the stranger. "Now, while Jacky's getting supper, tell me what you're doing out here, and who you are."

The stranger darted a keen glance at the two boys, as if to warn them that he would have nothing but the truth.

"We came here from Melbourne, where we'd been living a year."

"And before that?"

"America."

"And what are you doing in the bush?"

"Came here to find gold."

The stranger laughed heartily.

"That's a good one. Ha! ha! So you left your own country to find gold here. Of course you've got it. Say, your pockets are lined with it! No? Why, I'm surprised. Don't grin, Jacky, there's nothing to laugh at."

The stranger reached out his hand.

"Shake, youngster," he said heartily. "You mustn't mind a joke. Pluck's pluck, and you've shown it, and I like you for it. There's my hand on it."

"You know our names, sir," said Joe Rice; "will you tell us yours?"

"Oh!" said the stranger carelessly, "I'm 'The Hatter.'"

"Yes, but——"

"Stop!" said the stranger, interrupting him. "You're new, chums, as we say in Australia, so I'll explain myself. In bush parlance a 'hatter' means a man who lives and travels by himself, without a mate and without a name, except what he chooses to give. See? Well, I'm a hatter, have been for twenty years, and shall be till I strike it rich. Come, let's eat."

The supper was roast kangaroo, and the boys pronounced it the best meal they had eaten since leaving Albany. When it was over they soon thought of sleep. In a few minutes Harry was snoring. The Hatter looked at them anxiously once or twice.

"Those kids asleep, Jacky?" he said. "Have a look."

The black bent over the two prostrate forms and satisfied himself and the Hatter that they were slumbering soundly.

"Good!" said the Hatter. "I'll just fill up; then you start your yarn. Go slow with it, for, mind, I don't want to lose a word, and as I don't want anyone but me to hear a word, I'll just take another look."

The Hatter then made a personal inspection of the two boys to convince himself they were really asleep.

"Go right ahead, Jacky," he said. "An earthquake wouldn't wake them."

### CHAPTER III.—The Gold Queen—The Midnight Dance.

It often happens that a person who is over-fatigued is unable to sleep. This was the case now with Joe Rice. But Joe was apparently sleeping as soundly as Harry. The fact is, Joe was shamming. He had heard the Hatter say that he didn't want anyone but himself to hear a word of Jacky's yarn, and this was quite enough to determine Joe not to lose one syllable of it. Jacky started his story, but it is quite impossible to convey in words the kind of dialect he employed. It was a species of English, and it seemed that the Hatter was quite familiar with it, for he never had to ask Jacky to explain what his words meant. Joe Rice found it more difficult to understand what was being said, though he was helped by the Hatter, for the latter had a good deal to say, and his remarks were usually either an interpretation of Jacky's words or a comment upon them.

"Oh, it's many years ago," said Jacky, "when I was told first of this thing."

"How many?" queried the Hatter.

"Oh, many moons; many."

"Bah! that's the worst of you blacks. You haven't got any reasonable ways of counting. Why don't you go in for almanacs?"

Jacky took no notice of this remark, which was quite past his understanding.

"Let's get at it," said the Hatter. "There's only one way that I know. How big were you?"

"A pickaninny."

"That high?"

The Hatter held his hands about three feet off the ground.

"Yes, yes."

"That's about twenty years ago, then, I reckon. Well, what did you hear, and who did you hear it from? That's too much for you to swallow at once. Take one portion at a time."

"Someone came back to our tribe one day with a wonderful story. He'd been away for more than a moon, and we thought that the spirits had taken him. When he came back he had with him great lumps of yellow metal."

The Hatter grinned.

"I've heard of the stuff, Jacky. It's called gold."

"Now, we'd never seen this yellow metal before, and so we all wished to find out where he had got it. He'd been wandering in the bush and lost his way."

"Great Scott! his wits must have been wool-gathering. It's not often one of you blacks is bushed."

"Well, he was, and so he got into Never Never Land."

"Never Never Land. I'll make a note of that. Go on."

"He crossed the Never Never River and went on till he came to a range of hills there, and then he traveled north."

"The same way as the range ran?"

"Yes. Well, one day he came to a spot where the ground was strewn in every direction with bones."

"Some of your black friends been having roast man, I reckon."

"No. It was a place of worship, for there he saw, set up on the rock, the yellow woman."



"What?"

"The Gold Queen. He said it was made of solid yellow metal in the figure of a woman, and that it was so heavy that one man could not lift it."

"I'd have a good try."

"All around this woman were great lumps of the yellow metal, and the rocks that rose high seemed to be filled with it."

"Now for the next part of your story. Who was the gifted individual who invented this yarn?"

"It was the truth. It was my father; he always spoke true."

"I won't argue the point. Let's hear what happened. Of course you all went to this wonderful spot and carried off the gold?"

"For what! Gold is no use to the poor black."

"Stow that! The poor black finds gold very useful when he wants to buy rum from the white man. Anyway, the yellow woman would have been a great find, Jacky, for your tribe could have made an idol of her, and worshipped her."

"Her? No; she was a demon."

"Oh, she really had feelings. Well, Jacky, let's hear all about it."

"She cursed our tribe."

"What for?"

"Because my father had carried away the lumps of yellow metal."

"You had proof of this?"

"My father, a strong man, fell sick, and died. My mother went to the grave as well. The chief of our tribe became blind, and the only child of my father began to wither away."

"Something was done, of course?"

"Yes, the priests of our tribe held a meeting, and they decided that there'd be no mercy shown us until the yellow metal was restored. No one liked the job, for they were all afraid of the yellow woman's wrath. But one man, chosen by lot, was compelled to go. We never saw him again."

"But the tribe? What happened to it?"

"From that day all was well. We prospered."

"I see very well you ceased to wither away, Jacky. So you never went there again?"

"Never. It would be to tempt the vengeance of the yellow woman to do so."

"Anyway, you'll have to come with me to Never Never Land."

Jacky threw himself on the ground in abject terror.

"Oh, if you're going on like that you can stay behind. I thought you knew a bit more than the rest of your tribe. You won't come?"

Jacky shook his head.

"Very well, I'll go alone."

"Are you going to seek the Gold Queen?" asked Jacky, with amazement.

"That's my game. See here, I've been in this bush for a good many years, and I've heard of the Gold Queen before. That's what's kept me here. Till now, I was never able to locate it. Reckon what you tell me's a straight yarn. Anyway, I'm going to act on it, and as soon as the sun's up, Jacky, we'll be off."

The Hatter threw himself on the grass and soon fell asleep. But it was long before Joe Rice could do the same. Every nerve thrilled at the strange tale he had heard, and when he did find rest it was only to dream of the black, Jacky, and the Gold Queen.

"Here's a go!" cried Harry Hope the next morning. "Wake up, old man."

Joe Rice turned lazily over on his back and rubbed his eyes.

"What's up?"

"Why, Joe, our friend struck camp. Left us, in fact, during the night."

"Has he left our stores?"

"Don't seem to have touched 'em. Oh, he wasn't a thief; it was easy to see that."

Joe Rice by this time was up and bustling about, preparing a fire. All at once he saw a piece of paper affixed to one of the gum trees. Naturally he looked at it without delay.

"From the Hatter, Harry," he said. "Listen to what he says:

"I've a long journey before me, full of dangers, which I want no one to share with me. Go back, if you're wise lads. If you must go forward, keep due north. You will find water for a week. After that it is death to go on!"

"Very kind of the Hatter, I'm sure, Joe."

"Yes, very. Still, I'm not going to accept his advice. I don't intend to go back, and I'm not going due north."

"What will you do?"

"I'll find the Hatter's trail, Harry, and I'll stick to it like glue."

"See here, old man, the Hatter's treated us fair and square; there's no mistake about it, is there?"

"None."

"Very well. It's playing it pretty low down on a fellow who wishes to travel alone to dog his footsteps, isn't it?"

"Have your breakfast. Don't say a word, but listen. When I'm through have your say, not before," and while Harry was eating Joe Rice told him the wonderful story that Jacky had related to the Hatter. In dead silence Harry listened, for he was intensely interested, and it was only when Joe had finished that he uttered a word.

"Joe you're right!" he shouted, springing to his feet, "a thousand times right. We must keep on the Hatter's trail."

On that day the two boys proceeded. They had no difficulty in following the trail of the Hatter for he was riding, with Jacky walking by his side, and the hoof-marks and footsteps were plainly visible from time to time. The trail lay in a northwesterly direction, so it was clear that if the boys had followed the Hatter's advice they would have seen no more of him. Night had fallen for some time, though it was still very bright, for the moon was shining clear in the heavens. The boys still walked on, for they were anxious that the Hatter should not get too far ahead. Suddenly Joe brought Harry to a halt.

"I believe there are a lot of people ahead."

"Why?"

"Seems to me I saw some shadows flitting about through the trees."

"Hitch up the horse, then. We'll go forward and have a look round."

The boys had not gone very far before they discovered that Joe was right. Cautiously they advanced, until they reached a group of big trees, and behind the trunks they secreted themselves. Looking out, a strange sight met their eyes. On the ground the remains of a fire smouldered, and lying beside it were the Hatter and the black, both of them fast asleep. Around this sleeping pair a band of ferocious blacks had formed into a circle, and in this way they slowly and noiselessly moved past the doomed men.



## CHAPTER IV.—A Toilsome March.

"No shooting," whispered Joe Rice, hastily putting a restraining hand on Harry's shoulder.

"It's the only way to save them."

"No, Harry. Anyway, not if we fire from where we are now. Come."

"Why?"

"I have a plan."

Joe led the way, moving noiselessly amid the belt of trees that fringed the clearing where the Hatter and Jacky, the black, still lay fast asleep, with the hostile blacks formed in a circle around them.

"I hope your plan's a good one, Joe," said Harry, rather angrily. "I'll never forgive myself if anything happens to those two men through our leaving them. Recollect they saved our lives!"

"I forget nothing. Now, Harry, listen to me. If we'd jump out as you wanted to do what would have happened?"

"A few blacks would have gone under, I guess."

"And do we want to send any blacks under?"

"Well, no."

"I should think not. They've done us no harm, and we are not even sure that they mean mischief to the Hatter."

"It looks mighty like it."

"Stay where you are."

"Where are you going?"

"Round the other side. Directly I get there I shall fire."

"Not to kill?"

"Of course not. You do the same. Then dart away, say about twenty yards, and instantly fire again. That's what I mean."

"Good! They'll think there's a big force here."

"Yes, they'll imagine they're caught in a trap and they'll fly in all directions, and depend on it, they'll be so scared they won't even think of the two men."

Joe Rice hurried round to the opposite side of the clearing, and Harry, looking across, saw him raise his rifle to his shoulder ready to fire. Harry did the same. Bang! Bang! Joe fired and Harry instantly followed suit. Then both boys put in operation the tactics they had agreed upon, and almost immediately, from two entirely different parts of the circle came a series of shots. The blacks seemed instantly to be panic-stricken. They forgot the two sleeping men, and thought only of themselves. Wildly they made for the bush, dashed among the trees and flew in all directions, without once looking back. Scarcely had they gone when Joe Rice and Harry Hope made their appearance. The Hatter was standing up now, fully awake, with his rifle in his hand, and he held the weapon in a threatening attitude toward the boys.

"Put down your gun, mister!" cried Joe.

"We're friends."

"Great Scott! it's you, is it? Gosh! but I'm not quite awake yet, I'm thinking. Where in thunder did you spring from?"

"Never mind where we came from; we got here in time to help you."

"That's true. We were in a nasty corner. It's my own fault. Jacky wanted to keep watch. I wouldn't let him, telling him there were no blacks in this part of the bush. Well, I was wrong, and nearly paid for it with my life."

"Say, mister!" said Joe.

"Well?"

"You know better than I do what's to be done next."

"D'you intend to stay here?"

"Not much."

"I thought not."

"Mercy on us. Those black fellows'll get over their scare and back they'll come. We must strike camp and make tracks like greased lightning."

The Hatter's preparations for departure did not occupy a minute. He led his horse through the bushes, Jacky following, the boys going in advance toward the spot where they had left the pack-horse. Arrived there, the whole party started. Progress was not fast, for none of the fugitives were riding, except the Hatter, and he only went at a walking pace, so that his companions might keep up with him. However, by going on continuously, and traveling all night, they found, when morning came, that they had put a good distance between themselves and the spot from which they had started.

"I'm getting tired," said Harry.

"On, on!" cried the Hatter.

So on they went, pressing across a terrible desert from which all trace of vegetation had gone.

"Brace up, young un," said the Hatter. "Try a drop of this."

"What is it, water?"

"Drink, I say."

"Why, it's whisky!"

"Something like it," was the laughing answer. "I don't hold with boys taking the stuff 'cept in need. In such a time as this every drop's worth millions."

"I feel better, anyway."

"You will for a time. I'd be better without it, though," said the Hatter. "I drank a lot of it last night, so did Jacky. That's what made us sleep so sound."

"Reckon it saved your lives, anyway."

"How?"

"Why," said Joe, "if you'd woke up before we came, those black fellows would have speared you."

"By gosh, but that's so. See those rocks," cried the Hatter, pointing to a low ridge on the fringe of the desert. "Well, if I'm not mighty mistaken we'll find water there."

"Yes, yes, water!"

"Oh, you think so, too, do you, Jacky? Well, if that's the case it's all right. These blacks seem to smell water. It's wonderful, but they do."

"How far are those rocks?"

"I'd say about four miles."

"Four miles!" gasped Harry.

"That means four drinks of whisky," laughed the Hatter; "one a mile."

"No, no. I'll get there without."

And so Harry did, but it was a fearful struggle.

"Water!" cried Joe. "Jacky was right."

"Jacky, make tea."

Jacky was not long in kindling a good fire, and speedily he brewed the tea, which refreshed all the party.

"What's the next move?"

"Well, Joe, that's your name, isn't it? And you don't mind me calling you by it, do you?"

"No, Hatter."

"Good! The next move is for you and your



friend Harry to get under those rocks where you'll be in the shade; lay on your backs and go to sleep. Do you think you could manage it?"

"I'll have a good try, anyway," laughed Joe, and he hastened over to the place indicated, followed by Harry. In a few minutes the two boys, quite worn out, were sleeping soundly.

#### CHAPTER V.—Joe's Plan.

It was evening when the boys awoke, or rather when Jacky awakened them.

"What's the game?" cried Harry. "Are we on the tramp again?"

"No."

"You mean to stay here?"

"Why not?"

Joe had come up, and both he and Harry looked the picture of health and vigor now. The rest had quite restored them.

"Say," cried Joe, "if we stay here let's do something."

"Certainly," answered the Hatter. "Sit still. That'll be enough for you to do."

"I don't mean that. Aren't there any animals about we can get a shot at?"

"Plenty."

"Where?"

"They're not here yet. They will be when it gets later."

"What kind of animals are they, Hatter?"

"Much the same as you and me."

"The blacks?"

"You've said it."

"Oh! then you think we shall have trouble with them tonight?"

"I'm dead sure of it."

"Then why don't you move on?"

"What's the good? We won't find a place that'll give us better shelter than this does, and if we did strike camp the blacks would be bound to overtake us before morning."

Joe sat silent and thoughtful. Harry busied himself in keeping the fire going for want of something to occupy himself with. The Hatter, calm as ever, smoked his pipe, and Jacky sat by his side, seemingly indifferent to everything. Joe was the first to break the silence.

"See here, Hatter," he said. "It seems to me we've not much chance where we are now."

"I've already told you that we can't find a safer spot."

The tones of the Hatter's voice showed that he was somewhat irritated, but Joe took no notice of this sign of temper.

"Well, I don't know," said Joe, after a short pause, "but if we've got to fight here, at least we can do something to make things a bit safer."

"How?"

"Joe means," cried Harry, "we might build up a small fort."

"With what?"

"Those rocks."

The Hatter laughed loudly.

"Ha! ha!" he cried, "try your hand at moving one of them, my lad. No, no, that won't do, the whole four of us couldn't make the smallest rock you see budge an inch."

"That settles Joe's scheme."

"It's mighty kind of you, Harry, to explain my scheme to the Hatter."

"Not at all," laughed Harry. "I'd do anything in the world for you, Joe."

"Then don't try and read my thoughts again, for at that game you're a jay."

"Then you didn't mean building a fort?"

"Not at all."

"Well, what did you mean, Master Joe, if you don't mind telling us?"

"Well, friends," said Joe, "you see us sitting here and you see this fire?"

"Guess we ain't blind."

"Now, supposing we were to lay down, wrapped upon our blankets by the fire?"

"Thunder! why, those blacks'd skewer us with their spears."

"Ah! but supposing," said Joe, with an artful look, "that we really didn't happen to be in the blankets around the fire?"

"Go on!" said the Hatter.

"Instead of our being in the blankets, there would be four logs of wood, made up to look like us."

The face of the Hatter began to brighten up now, and he waited anxiously for the continuation of Joe's scheme.

"Now, you see those rocks over there?"

"Yes."

"Good! Well, our four wooden representatives would be warming themselves by the fire, and we should be behind those rocks."

"So that——"

"When the blacks come up they'll think we're asleep by the fire. They'll creep pretty close, then they'll let fly a shower of spears. At the same time we shall pepper them with bullets. Now d'you understand?"

The Hatter sprang about three feet into the air.

"By gosh!" he shouted excitedly, "when I'm king of Never Never Land, Joe Rice shall be commander-in-chief of my army."

Joe's plan put them all in a good humor. The very fact of having something to do was a relief, and everybody went to work with a will. Plenty of wood was at hand, for the place had often been used for a camping-ground. Four large logs were dragged over and placed in position near the fire. Then each log was wrapped in a blanket. From a little distance it was impossible to discover the fraud.

"The sooner we get behind the rocks the better."

"Not a doubt of it," replied the Hatter, "but what in thunder is Joe doing?"

"Oh, he's not had enough exercise, so he's dragging a few more logs over. It's such pleasant work."

Joe certainly threw three great pieces of wood onto the fire.

"What's the game?"

"To smother the flame for a time, so that we can steal over to those rocks in the dark without running the risk of being seen by the blacks in case they're anywhere near."

"Gosh! but you're a wonder."

"I've got brains, that's all."

Under cover of the darkness that Joe had caused, the four made their way to the rocks, of course, taking all their arms with them. Five minutes later Jacky grunted, and the Hatter, who understood him, knew something had happened.

"Out with it, Jacky."

"Master, they are coming now. I can see them."



They all believed him, though his eyes alone were able to discern any object in the darkness, and with their rifles in their hands they awaited the enemy.

## CHAPTER VI.—The Boys in Trouble.

The blacks had come into view. The fire was shooting up great flames, rendering every spot as bright as though it was day, and the four behind the rocks saw that they had not over-estimated the number of the enemy. There were not less than forty blacks approaching, looking frightful with their naked bodies covered with streaks of paint. On they came, stealthily. Suddenly they came to a halt, and their leader made some signs which seemed to cause much joy.

"He's pointing to the dummies round the fire."

"Yes, he thinks we're asleep."

"He'll find out his mistake pretty quick."

"Look!"

As Joe spoke a forest of spears waved in the air, and the boys saw the savages getting ready to hurl their long warspears with their horrible barbed points. Harry knitted his brows.

"Wretches!" he muttered. "We've done you no harm and you wish to kill us. I've no regrets now."

"Fire when I speak," whispered the Hatter.

The leader of the savages raised his hand. Instantly there was a wild whoop, calculated to chill the blood with terror, and immediately twenty spears flew at the dummies around the fire, some of them piercing the logs wrapped in the blankets.

"Now let them have it!" shouted the Hatter, and instantly three rifles were fired.

Almost immediately three blacks dropped, for neither the Hatter nor the boys had missed the marks at which either of them had aimed. The blacks were terror-stricken, but they did not run away at once.

"Fire again!" cried the Hatter, and instantly another volley was sent at the enemy.

By this time, however, the blacks had had enough of a fight with an unseen enemy and they were rapidly retreating.

"Stay here, lads," exclaimed the Hatter.

"But where are you going?"

"Guess I'll follow up those black chaps a bit and see whether they're going right off."

Scarcely had the Hatter departed than Harry shook Joe's arm to attract his attention.

"See!" he said.

"I'm looking, but I see nothing but darkness. The fire's pretty well out, and it's not easy now to make out anything."

"D'you mean to tell me you can't see something moving about the ground?"

"Where?"

"Over by the horses. Take a good look, Joe. Tell me what it is."

Joe Rice looked, long and steadily, in the direction indicated.

"Well, what is it?"

"Blacks."

"Sure?"

"Absolutely."

"What's their game?"

"A game that must be stopped, and without delay, too. They are after the horses."

"Great Scott! and I never thought of it. We'll finish them off."

Harry was delighted with what had happened. The prospect of an encounter at close quarters with the blacks was full of excitement. Stealthily the two boys made their way toward the horses, not going across the open plain, but crawling over the rocks. This was a work that occupied more time, but it enabled them to get to the spot without being seen by the blacks. Arrived there, the boys looked over one of the highest rocks and saw that several blacks were now within a few yards of the horses.

"That's near enough," muttered Joe.

"I should think so. We must put an end to their fun, instantly."

So the two boys sprang out.

"Here, you black fellows!" shouted Harry, holding his six-shooter at them. "If you don't want to be blown to kingdom come you'd better skip. Skip, I say!"

The reply was delivered in the most unexpected manner. There was a dull sound. It was the noise caused by something heavy falling on Harry's head, and it was followed by Harry sinking to the ground, apparently lifeless. Joe was completely astounded by this occurrence. He turned around to seek the cause of it, and this turning round was what got him into trouble. The instant he was looking away from the blacks three of them sprang forward and, with the swiftness of lightning, they threw themselves on Joe Rice.

"Keep back!" he cried, thinking that his words might have some effect, and as he shouted he continued to struggle to free himself from his captors' arms.

The grip they had on him was one from which there was no escape, and in a minute or so Joe realized that he was overpowered. Now he began to shout to the Hatter, in the hope that the latter might be near enough for the words to reach his ears.

"Help! help! These black fellows are carrying me off!"

They really were doing it, and despite his struggles he was being taken away from the camp. One of the blacks said something in the native tongue, and instantly a hand was placed over Joe's mouth to stifle his cries. However, Joe had been heard. The Hatter, followed by Jacky, came running up, and naturally he went to the rocks where he had left the two boys. It did not take him long to discover that serious events had occurred during his short absence, for he found Harry lying where he had fallen.

"Dead!" he cried, aghast. "Mercy! I hope this poor boy isn't finished with. My fault," he continued, bitterly. "I should never have left the camp."

"Not dead, master," said Jacky, who had been bending over the prostrate lad.

"Good news, Jacky, what you tell me. Hope it's true. Yes, I can feel his heart beat; so he's all right. A drop of the infallible will pull him together in double quick time."

Saying which the Hatter opened the boy's lips and poured down his throat a small quantity of the whisky. It had such a potent effect that Harry was sitting up in a few moments. He looked round dazed for a few seconds. Then he gave a cry.

"Where's Joe?"

"Reckon I don't know."

"Ah! I remember now, the savages. They've carried him off."



"The blacks. Say, think you can run? Stand up and try."

"Very well, we must run after those fellows. Jacky'll trail them for us. Come!"

In less than a quarter of a mile they came in sight of the blacks, who had been able to proceed slowly only, probably owing to Joe's struggles.

"Found!" cried the Hatter. "We'll have him away from them at once. Leave this business to me. I'll tackle these men."

The blacks, with their prisoner, had halted now. Turning, they faced the pursuers in the boldest manner possible. Harry and the Hatter covered them with their guns.

"Now," said the Hatter, speaking in the native tongue, "surrender that boy, or we'll shoot you!"

"There are three of us here," was the reply. "You can only kill two at one shot. The third man will stab the boy!"

And with a fiendish look of triumph on his face he held a long, keen-bladed knife at Joe's breast.

## CHAPTER VII.—Arrival at the River.

"He's lost!" gasped Harry, clutching at the Hatter's arm as he spoke.

"Not quite yet, my lad," answered the Hatter, hoarsely, "but he's in a mighty bad fix."

"Can we do anything?"

"Talk, that's all. We can't fire, that's dead sure. The black villain's right. If we sent a shot at either of those men they'd plant the dagger in your chum's heart instantly."

"Then what's the good of talking?"

All this talk had taken place very hurriedly, while the Hatter and Harry stood watching the three blacks and Joe Rice, their prisoner. The natives now began to move away, taking care to keep their faces towards the whites, so as to watch their movements. Naturally, going in this fashion, they could not retreat very rapidly. The Hatter hoped to detain them, for he knew if they once reached the main body of the blacks it would be almost impossible to rescue Joe.

"Say," he cried, speaking in a native dialect, "what's your hurry?"

The blacks stopped at once, and one of them—the man who had spoken before—answered in the same tongue:

"No time to wait," he said. "We hasten to join our friends."

"Let's make a treaty," exclaimed the Hatter.

"For what purpose?"

"To benefit you and us."

The black grinned.

"Ah, you don't think we can help you," answered the Hatter, keeping down his temper with difficulty.

The black nodded in assent.

"Well, there you're wrong. You don't want our friend. He's no use to you."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"No. I'm going to tell you what we'll do. You give him up."

"Never!"

"Wait; I'm not through yet. You give him up to us and we won't hurt a hair of your heads. And say, we'll give you a great piece of tobacco—"

The Hatter stopped to see the effect of the

bribe, and was amazed to find it was coolly received.

"That's not all; you shall have—" again he paused to make the offer more impressive. "You shall have a great bottle of fire-water."

"Ah!"

Two of the blacks gave a shout of satisfaction at this, and the Hatter turned hastily to Harry.

"The game's ours," he said, with a smile; "the whisky hit the mark at once."

Here, again, the Hatter found he had made a mistake. Some excited talk was going on between the three blacks, in the course of which the one who had acted as spokesman made use of many threatening gestures. As soon as the talk was at an end, he spoke.

"Keep your fire-water," he said, mockingly. "We'll keep our prisoner. Besides—"

"Well?"

"When we want fire-water we'll take it. You are three. We are more than ten times as many. If you want to keep your fire-water drink it quickly, or it won't be safe. Ha! ha!"

The notion seemed to amuse the natives, and they laughed loudly.

"He's scared those men," said the Hatter.

"How?"

"Told them that the chief will kill them if they give up the prisoner. That's why they won't. Thunder! never in my life did I see a nigger refuse whisky before. What's that?"

"Jacky!"

"Jacky's done the trick."

The friendly black, Jacky, had crawled away unperceived by anybody, while the talk was taking place between the Hatter and the black, and he had drawn quite near to the latter. Suddenly he sprang forward, and doing so he landed heavily on the man with the knife, hurling him to the earth and knocking the weapon from his hand. Then the black followed up his advantage by throwing himself on his fallen enemy and keeping him where he lay.

"Our time's come, Harry!" cried the Hatter. "Cover one of those scoundrels with your rifle. I'll take the other. Ah! you've already done it. Guess you don't want much telling. Now," shouted the Hatter, in a voice of thunder, "let go that lad or we'll kill you!"

For a moment the two blacks stared hard at the speaker, but their hesitation was only momentary. They released Joe Rice, and without stopping to think of their comrade they turned and fled, evidently being surprised to find themselves alive.

"Off with you!" shouted the Hatter. "Get up, Jacky, and let that wretch skip."

In less than ten minutes the party struck camp, and once more resumed its toilsome march. The sun rose, and noon came with its fierce, burning heat, and at length even the Hatter agreed that a halt must be made.

"When we get to those gum-trees we'll camp," he said.

"Listen!"

"I hear nothing, Joe."

"You would if you'd stop singing. Say, Hatter, can't you hear anything?"

"Gosh! it's water."

"Where?"

"Ahead of us. Must have been rain higher up, or the stream would be dry. These Australian



ivers are queer things. Dry one day and a rushing torrent the next, and then in a few days as dry as ever again."

"Well, this isn't dry!" shouted Joe, joyfully. "Look how the water's running. It does one good to see it after being frizzled on this desert like we've been."

"Hurrah!" cried Harry, throwing down his rifle. "Now we'll have a great time. Off with your clothes, Joe, and have a swim."

"You're crazy!" shouted the Hatter.

"Crazy or not, I'll be in that water before you can count ten."

Before the Hatter could say another word the two boys were rushing toward the river.

#### CHAPTER VIII.—The Boys Have a Swim.

Harry and Joe arrived at the bank and plunged headlong into the stream without a moment's hesitation. The Hatter and Jacky were at the brink of the stream now.

"Come back!" cried the former. "You'll be drowned for sure if you don't."

It was good advice, and the two boys, having had their fun, were disposed to follow it. It so happened, however, that it was impossible for them to do so. The torrent had by now attained a fearful rapidity. The boys were silent now. They had no breath to waste in talk, and, in fact, they had as much as ever they could do to keep themselves afloat. The Hatter was alarmed, but he had no means of helping them. He and Jacky followed, keeping close to the water's edge, hoping that the current would bring the boys within reach. The contrary took place. The water forced them every instant further out into the middle of the river.

"Look!" cried Jacky.

"Well?"

"See there!"

"Ah! that's so: an island in the stream. It's not much out of the water. Still, it's a resting-place. Once they get there something may be done. Hurry, Joe!" shouted the Hatter.

Joe Rice glanced round.

"Make for that island ahead of you!"

Every stroke carried them yards nearer the island and eventually they landed there, not much the worse for what had happened, merely feeling somewhat out of breath. They stood up a few minutes to shake themselves, and then once more they went into the water, lying full length in the shallows with only their heads showing.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Hatter, "the sun's just a bit too warm, is it? Well, I reckon this'll be a lesson to them, anyway."

The Hatter stood up and lit his pipe, hoping to obtain some comfort from that. In this he was evidently disappointed, for a few minutes later he dashed it on the ground with a cry of despair. Jacky looked up, wonderingly, never saying a word, but evidently awaiting an explanation.

"You don't see?" shouted the Hatter to Jacky.

"Me see. Oh, yes, very well."

"You see nothing," answered the Hatter, scornfully, "and I was nearly as blind. Those boys are lost, Jacky. The river's rising, not falling. In an hour the island will be covered and they will be swept away."

The Hatter had no thought of leaving the boys to their fate. He had determined to save them if it was possible for him to do so, and so he ran hastily to his pack-horse, and now he was coming back to the river with a long coil of rope in his hand.

"If we can get this rope across, they're all right," he cried.

Rapidly he unwound it.

"Get me a stone, Jacky!" he exclaimed, while he was at this task. "Not too big, mind."

Jacky seemed to understand what was required for he returned in a few minutes with one of the required shape and size. Without a moment's loss of time the Hatter tied the rope carefully to the stone.

"Hold fast to the end of the cord, Jacky. Get off the rope. Let it run free."

The Hatter hurled the stone with all his force toward the island. Time after time he tried to land it there, but the distance was too great. He never got within thirty yards of the island.

"Take a hand at it, Jacky!" he exclaimed, in despair.

The blacks can throw to a wonderful distance, but although Jacky sent the stone ten yards further than the Hatter had done, his efforts met with no success.

"You see, Harry!" cried Joe.

"Yes, I see it's all over with us, and so does the Hatter."

The last-named was sitting on the ground now, looking the picture of despair.

#### CHAPTER IX.—On the March Again.

The Hatter did not remain in this attitude long. He sprang up, and dashed his hat on the ground, using an angry expression as he did so.

"They swam across, why shouldn't I? Give me the rope, Jacky, or, say, tie it round me and hang on to the other end."

The Hatter had taken off his clothes, and with the rope fastened around him, he sprang into the stream. The current had changed, as the boys speedily saw.

"He can't reach us!" cried Joe. "Strange, but we came along right enough."

"Yes, I see how he's fighting with the water, but it's no use. He'll have to go back."

"He's going now. So are we. There's not much of the island left now."

"The Hatter's landed. What's the next move?"

"He's bringing great logs down to the water's edge, and, hello! there's Jacky, come back from the horses with a lot more cord."

"Great Scott! he's making a raft!"

"A raft! Waste of time, Harry."

"Why?"

"If he couldn't get here, how's the raft to do it? Wonder he doesn't see that."

"He's working pretty smart. Why, he's going to launch it. See, he's got it fast to the rope, and he's holding the end of it, Joe."

"No, by jingo, he isn't!" cried Joe Rice, merrily. "It's a smart scheme, and no mistake."

Joe rushed up to his armpits in the water, and at the same instant Jacky, standing on the raft, hurled the stone toward the island. The throw was a good one. Joe caught the rope, which was fastened to the stone.



"Don't let go, Joe."

"Think I'm an idiot? Come, hang on—this rope will hold two of us. It's fastened to a tree, so all's safe."

The boys had little trouble in getting back now, and in a few minutes Joe, Harry, the Hatter and Jacky were all having a good laugh over what had ended so happily, but might easily have been a tragedy. Jacky was now shouting to them. He had boiled the billy and made the tea, and feeling hungry as sharks after their exertions, they sat down near the fire and made a hearty meal, after which they started on again. Till nightfall on they went. The Hatter said little, contenting himself with pulling away at his pipe. Such scenes were not new to him, but the boys found something to interest them at every step they took. Soon after starting next morning the horses began to exhibit signs of agitation. They danced round and round, pricked up their ears and trembled from head to foot. The Hatter looked about him anxiously.

"They're scared!" he cried.

"What is it? Blacks?"

"Don't think so, Joe. Most likely a lirk."

"A lirk! That's a snake."

"It's a pretty bad sort of reptile. Just you boys cast your eyes round you. If you see anything that looks like a log, it's a lirk, and it's a case of 'Hands off!'"

"Can't be that, for there isn't even a twig on the ground."

"Bring that horse along, Jacky. I'll take the other. Steady, steady, now," said the Hatter, patting him. "There's nothing to get scared at. Come!"

The Hatter and Jacky, assisted by the boys, urged the two trembling animals forward until they came to a thick growth of bushes and scrub. Here it was even more difficult to get the horses to move, and, as the party advanced, they kept their weapons ready for instant action, fearing some danger was near. Then Joe made a great discovery.

"Camels!" he shouted at the top of his voice, and he and Harry were so surprised that they remained rooted to the spot. The boys and the Hatter scanned the great desert, broken here and there by scrub, anxiously looking for the owners of the animals, but seeing no one.

"Hello! hello!" shouted Joe, as loudly as possible.

No answer came in response to his cries, but to their utter amazement a young girl rose from behind some bushes and stared at them.

## CHAPTER X.—The Girl's Story.

"Papa!" cried the girl, clapping her hands together, joyfully.

"Where are the rest of your family?" said Joe Rice to the Hatter, with a laugh.

"Ha! ha!" exclaimed Harry. "You never told us about them."

"For the reason that they don't exist. You see the poor child has discovered her mistake. Let us go to her and see what it means."

The girl seemed to be about fourteen years old. She was very pretty, with bright, golden hair, and, no doubt, had plenty of color on her cheeks,

but they were pale now, for she was evidently frightened at seeing the strangers.

"Were you expecting your father?" asked Joe.

"Yes, yes. Have you seen him?"

"We haven't come across any one. Was he alone?"

"Oh, no! My two brothers were with him."

"And these camels are yours?"

"Yes."

"Then," said the Hatter, joining in the talk, "there's nothing to be frightened about, for, depend upon it, my dear child, they'll soon be back."

"My father and my brothers went away this morning to hunt. They left me asleep, but when I woke up and found they hadn't returned I wasn't alarmed, because last night they told me they should leave the camp early, and I wasn't to feel frightened. Of course, when I heard you calling I thought they had come back."

"Are you on a hunting expedition?"

"No, no," said the girl, somewhat sadly. "My father was a farmer, and he had a large station with a great quantity of sheep. Then the drought came; the ponds all dried up; there was no water; the grass disappeared and the sheep died."

"An old story," said the Hatter. "And so your poor father was ruined?"

"Yes, sir. So he decided to strike for the West Australian gold fields. That's where we are bound for now."

"Guess we'd better sit down and wait," said Harry.

"Right," answered the Hatter; "we can't leave the girl here alone. It's a good chance to have a bit of something. Start a fire, Jacky, and give us something to eat."

While Jacky was at his work the Hatter was busy trying to pacify the horses who were still very restive. Eventually he succeeded. When he got back to the camp he found the two boys and the girl chatting away as freely as if they had known each other all their lives. The meal was a merry one.

"And where are you going?" asked the girl.

"To Never Never Land."

"I never heard of it."

"You should have given us the old joke again," cried Harry.

"What's that?"

"Why, that you never, never heard of it. I should have done it."

"Yes, but she's not quite so foolish."

"Thanks, Joe."

"You see how grateful he is for any little kindness."

"I wish papa would come," said the girl, getting up and looking all around.

"Tell you what!" cried Joe.

"Well, out with it. One of your brilliant ideas, I suppose."

"Yes, I get them sometimes. Say, we'll go and look for the wanderers. How does that strike you?"

"No reason why we shouldn't," said the Hatter.

"Perhaps they've lost themselves."

"That's not likely, Joe."

"But it is," replied the Hatter. "And it's precious easy to do it, too. Why, even the natives get 'bushed,' as we call it, sometimes."

"Let me go with you," persisted the girl.

"No, no! The sun's too scorching! Keep in the shade of these bushes as well as you can. We're used to the sun and don't mind it."



"So am I."

"Very likely, but we'll go much faster without you, and bring your father back all the quicker." The last idea seemed to satisfy the girl, and she saw the boys and the Hatter start without showing any further desire to go with them. Eventually, however, the trail, which had become fainter entirely disappeared, as even the Hatter was bound to admit.

"Let's separate," cried Harry.

"A good idea, isn't it, Hatter?"

"You bet! Listen to one thing."

"What's that?"

"Let's keep in sight of each other, then we'll be on the safe side. Now, mind, don't forget."

"All right."

The Hatter went straight on. The boys diverged on each side of him, getting further away at each step, but still keeping in mind the Hatter's advice. Joe reached a grove gum-tree and sorted it. A minute later the Hatter saw him rush out again, waving his hands excitedly.

"Something's up," muttered the Hatter, and instantly he began to shout to Harry.

"This way, Harry. Hurry up, my lad."

Harry, hearing the cries, came bounding across the sand, urged on more by the gestures he saw Joe making than by the Hatter's shouts. The Hatter had already started for Joe, going slowly, and when Harry joined him he quickened his pace and soon they reached Joe.

"Come!" exclaimed Joe, hoarsely.

Silently, full of wonder, they followed him, and when they had gone about one hundred yards all three came to a sudden halt. Joe said nothing. But Harry and the Hatter uttered cries of horror. A shocking sight presented itself. On the ground in front of them lay three men quite dead, with a crop of spears sticking out of each. Already they were covered with ants, and the crows were near at hand ready for a feast.

"Horrible!" cried Harry, aghast at what he saw.

"The father and the two brothers!" exclaimed Joe. "This is a dreadful business."

"It's an awful story we have to carry back to the girl," said the Hatter.

"Frightful."

"She must never know!" cried Joe Rice, quickly. "It would kill her."

They were all silent, for they knew Joe was right.

## CHAPTER XI.—Rose and the Snake.

"The story we have to tell her requires some thinking over," said Harry.

"You never spoke a truer word. Let it wait, though."

"Why, Hatter?"

"We have work to do."

"Where?"

"We must put those poor fellows under the ground," said the Hatter, pointing to the bodies.

"And that's all we can do for them."

Instantly they began to scrape away the sand, using some pieces of wood and also the spears of the blacks to assist them. This took some time and when it was finished the three bodies were all laid out in the grave that had been hollowed

out. Bareheaded, they stood around the place of burial, and Joe said a simple prayer his mother had taught him. Then rapidly the sand was heaped over the corpses, and some great stones were set to mark the spot.

"How about the story we've to tell?"

"All right, Hatter, we'll invent that as we go along. We've a good step to go."

"Look here," said Joe, "the simpler our yarn is the better."

"That's admitted."

"Well, Harry, we'll suppose they've got 'bushed,' as the Hatter calls it. Lost themselves, in other words. Then we wait around where we are in the camp. We'll wait there twenty-four hours, if you like. At the end of that time we'll start again and keep a good lookout for them."

"You've struck it, Joe."

"But, Hatter," said Harry, "can we venture to stay in the camp so long? Think of those blacks who must be near."

"The longer we stay the better. Those niggers have gone down stream, Harry, for I saw their trail. Let them get a good start of us."

"Very well, that's the yarn. Who'll tell it?"

"Why, the Hatter, of course," cried Joe. "I did my part of the work in inventing it."

"I'm agreeable, lads. But see here. No long faces, mind; that'd give the whole thing away. Try and look cheerful, and don't seem to worry. It's mighty hard, lads, but it must be done. Ah! there's the girl waiting for us. Now for it."

"Are they coming?" cried the girl.

"It's patience you must have, my dear. The fact is, they've got bushed. You know what that is. All we can do is to wait till they come back. Don't be anxious, for you've no need to be."

"They'll be back all safe and sound," cried Joe.

"And meanwhile," laughed Harry, "we'll try and get along without them. Give us a song, Joe. Light your pipe, Hatter, and Jacky, make some tea."

The girl was completely deceived by their manner, and when night came she fell asleep and they covered her with a blanket, for it was chilly. All that night Joe and Harry, the Hatter and Jacky kept watch, for the blacks might be near, but morning came and not a suspicious sound had been heard. Toward evening the Hatter proceeded to carry out the second part of the program by suggesting that it was time to move.

"We must find them, my dear," he said. "You must trust to us to do what's best."

And as the girl offered no objection a start was made.

"No more walking now!" cried Harry. "It's great to be on a camel, isn't it, Joe?"

"Grand!"

The Hatter smiled and said nothing, at least for a time.

"Something wrong with the tea, I reckon," he remarked after a while.

"Whatever makes you say that?" asked the girl. "Why, Jacky makes the best tea I ever tasted."

Jacky smiled from ear to ear with delight.

"Perhaps I'm wrong," went on the Hatter, gravely. "Maybe it's the sun that's turned Harry and Joe green and yellow, or, I have it, the camels! It's great to be on a camel, isn't it?"

"Grand!" cried the girl, with a burst of laughter.



"I've had enough, anyway!" shouted Joe, springing off the animal's back.

"It's like being on a ship," gasped Harry, following his example. "Guess I'll walk a bit."

"We won't go any further to-night," said the Hatter. "You can rest."

"You'll soon get used to the motion," said the girl. "I was like it when we started. Well, good-night, boys, I'm going to sleep."

"What! without any supper?"

"I'm too tired."

"One minute. Before you leave us," said Joe, "won't you tell us your name? Mine's Joe Rice."

"And mine, Harry Hope."

"I'm Rose Foster."

"Good-night, Miss Foster!" said each of the boys.

"Good-night, Mr. Rice. Good-night, Mr. Hope," answered the girl, gravely. Then they all three laughed together. The formal way in which they had addressed each other in the bush seemed so comical.

"This is a nice business," muttered the Hatter. "Got a girl to take care of now, and I suppose those two youngsters'll be ready to cut each other's throats over her before long. Oh, well, it can't be helped, so I'll have a pipe."

The Hatter always sought comfort in this way, and he sat up, smoking, long after the boys were asleep, leaving Jacky on guard half the night. Then, until morning, he kept a close watch. While Jacky was cooking breakfast the Hatter went for a stroll, thinking it advisable to have a good look around. Rose Foster was still asleep, and Joe and Harry were cleaning their rifles some distance from her. All at once Harry grasped Joe's arm.

"Look at Rose!"

"What of it? I see her."

"Don't make a sound. You mustn't risk waking her."

"Thank you!" answered Joe, stiffly. "Guess I know how to behave myself."

"Ah, but don't you see, Joe? That frightful thing on her blanket."

"A piece of wood off a tree."

"No, no, it's a snake. I saw it move."

"What!"

"Quiet! Watch it!"

"Mercy, but you're right! One bite, and it's all over with her. What's to be done, Harry?"

"Is your pistol loaded, Joe?"

"Yes."

"So's mine."

"I wouldn't dare to shoot from here."

"Neither would I. We must crawl close over and smash its head with our bullets. If we get near we sha'n't hit Rose."

The two boys glided stealthily forward, and Jacky, turning, saw with his quick eye how great was the peril. Seeing the Hatter approaching, the black checked him by waving his hands, for he knew that any noise might rouse the snake. Bang! bang! The boys, when near enough, fired. The shots were good ones, and the head of the snake was practically carried away. Rose sat up with a start, hastily throwing the blanket aside.

"Why did you do that?" she asked, tremblingly.

"It's——" began Harry.

"A way we have of waking our friends," cried Joe, with a laugh. "Get the cobwebs out of your eyes, Rose, and come and have breakfast."

Not until that was at an end did they tell Rose and the Hatter of her miraculous escape.

## CHAPTER XII.—A Corroboree.

Two days later they crossed the river, or rather the bed of the stream. It was now quite dry, as the Hatter had predicted. Slowly they journeyed on for the most part across burning sandy deserts. They had met with no blacks, and it was unlikely they would do so until the nature of the country changed. Nothing but absolute necessity would drive people to such a land as they were now in. Rose asked often about her father and brothers, and the boys and the Hatter did their best to quiet her. This was not difficult, for the thought of what had taken place had never entered her head. Two days later the party came to a well-wooded country, in which the grass grew as soft as moss. They had shade whenever they required it. There was an abundance of game to be met with, and fruits of various kinds grew plentifully.

"Now we're living!" cried Joe.

"But perhaps nearer death."

"Why, Hatter! You are a Job's comforter. Don't throw cold water on us."

"What d'you mean, Hatter," asked Harry, "by that peculiar remark?"

"It's pretty plain, I'm thinking. Where there's fruit and game there's blacks. See? Well, those blacks may likely as not fill us with spears if we run against them."

"We must keep good watch, then. That's all there is to it."

"I shouldn't mind a brush with them, Joe."

"Nor me, Harry, especially if we can only meet with the crowd that killed Rose's people."

"You have your wish!" cried the Hatter, instantly. "Look!"

He pointed to the bushes that were opening in every direction, and through the spaces blacks were pouring in great numbers. Rose shrieked. Harry and Joe put their rifles to their shoulders instantly. Quick as lightning the Hatter jumped forward and laid his hands on the boys.

"Are you crazy?" he asked, sternly. "Make no resistance. We are overpowered. Fire one shot and it's death to all of us."

The boys realized in a moment how wise his advice was. They could not have defended themselves for five minutes. Already at least one hundred blacks were on the scene. They were of all ages, and women were plentifully mingled with the crowd. The blacks showed no signs of hostility. On the contrary an old man, who appeared to be their chief, came forward with signs of deepest humility. He spoke to the Hatter, who answered him in the same dialect.

"What's he saying?"

"It's all right, Joe. These blacks are friendly, and when they are friendly you can trust them absolutely."

"That's good news."

"Yes. They're going to hold a corroboree."

"What's that?"

"A feast, and they invite us to join."



"Guess we'll take it in," exclaimed Harry. "It ought to be good fun."

"Well, I accepted the invitation and told him to go right ahead and we'd follow. Come along, boys. Cheer up, Rose. There's nothing to fear."

In ten minutes the party reached an open space and at once they dismounted. Here more blacks were found. They were heaping fuel on a huge fire, which burned fiercely. In the middle of this fire were what appeared to be three great lumps of mud. Almost immediately the blacks, men, women and children, formed in two great rings around the fire. They looked dreadful, for they were half-naked, streaked with chalk, yelled at the top of their voices, and brandished their war-spears.

"Won't they ever stop?" asked Harry.

"Yes, as soon as the food's cooked."

"But I don't see any."

"Wait and you will."

They danced for fully an hour. Then, as soon as they stopped one of the men, with a long pole, raked out from the fire the three lumps of mud.

"Now, look," said the Hatter.

The first lump of mud was opened and contained a roasted kangaroo. In the second lump was a fine emu, and in the third—which was the largest—was a mixed assortment of snakes and birds.

"I pass the last," said Joe.

"Oh, it's horrible! Shall we have to eat it?"

"Guess we'll have to eat something, Rose, to please the people. If they give us a choice, try a bit of kangaroo, and pretend you're enjoying yourself. That's the great thing."

"I'll try."

The blacks were perfectly satisfied with their guests. They all partook of the roast kangaroo, which, as a matter of fact, was not unpleasant. When every vestige of the food had disappeared the natives, notwithstanding the amount they had eaten, began to dance again. However, nature asserted itself speedily, and one after another they soon fell on the grass and were speedily fast asleep. Except the whites, one black man and three hideous-looking women, all were slumbering now. One of the black women was especially attentive to the Hatter. The two others were much taken up with the boys. The black man was leering at Rose in a frightful manner.

"They're getting a bit too friendly, Hatter."

"It's all right. They mean no harm."

"Let's hope not."

"My brothers and my sister," began the black man.

"Why, he speaks English!"

"Steady, Joe. Don't interrupt. Let's listen."

"My brothers and my sister," repeated the black man, "you have come among us, and we have learned to love you."

"You haven't taken long about it," cried Joe.

"You shall never leave us," said the black man, solemnly. "Never! My brethren, you shall marry my three black sisters. I will make this white girl my wife. Let us be friends."

#### CHAPTER XIII.—Joe Gives His Friends a Surprise.

"Marry you!" cried Joe. "Not——"

Joe stopped at this point, for the Hatter was looking at him with a warning expression on his face.

"Well, not this minute," said Joe after a pause, which enabled him to collect his thoughts.

"See here, Warunga," said the Hatter, "I don't mind telling you that we've been taken by surprise—fairly staggered, my friend."

Warunga grinned.

"What does my white friend want?"

Warunga was acute, and he was beginning to be suspicious of this aimless talk.

"Your white friend wants to know when the day is to be that is to make him a happy man?"

"You mean the day when you're to be married?"

"You've hit it."

"When one sun and two moons have come and gone, the wedding will take place."

"Thanks, Warunga. That means the day after to-morrow, in our way of speaking."

Warunga grunted assent.

"Can't you give us a day or two longer?" asked Joe.

"No, no."

"You try him, Rose," whispered Harry.

"Please delay the—the——" Rose almost choked—"the marriage for a few days."

"It may not be. The wise man of the tribe has fixed the day. We cannot alter it."

The Hatter sat silent. He knew perfectly well that if the wise man had been consulted in the matter his decision was final, for he was acquainted with the customs of the blacks. Warunga rose at this point and signaled to the black women to do the same.

"The white maiden will go with these women of my tribe."

The Hatter came to Rose's rescue instantly.

"That can't be, Warunga."

"Why not?"

"Because our wise man told us she must dwell with her own people till the day comes for her to be your bride."

"The wise man of the whites?"

"I said so."

"What the wise men say," remarked Warunga after a pause, "must be obeyed."

"I thought that would fix you," muttered the Hatter. He knew how superstitious the blacks were.

"We shall see you to-morrow?" asked Joe, anxiously.

"When day breaks," replied Warunga.

And then the old chief and his three women friends retired to their own quarters.

"Well, I don't know, Hatter," cried Joe, instantly, "but you're a nice kind of a friend."

"There's worse about."

"Maybe, but I've no time to look for them," answered Joe, hotly.

"You're a bad, wicked man, Hatter," exclaimed Rose, "and I'll never, never forgive you!"

"Oh, yes, you will!"

"We shall see."

"Now, Harry!" cried the Hatter.

"Well?"

"It's your turn."

"To do what?"

"To let me have it in the neck. Can't you say something nice about me?"

"No."

"How's that?"

"Can't express my thoughts. My stock of language isn't enough; I'd want a dictionary."



"Ha! ha!"

"Oh, it is a laughing matter, is it?"

"No, Joe, not by a mile, but can't you see I was acting for the best?"

"You were?"

"Why, of course. You don't suppose I intended to marry that fearful old hag, do you? Not much! No, no, boys, we must get out of this scrape somehow."

"You don't think they will change their minds to-morrow?"

"Not the slightest chance, Rose, not the slightest. What the wise man says goes. He's looked upon as a god. I know, because I understand some of their jabber. That's how I managed to keep Rose with us."

"Yes, that was good of you."

"So then you do forgive me?"

"I must, I suppose."

"Then," said Joe, "as they won't alter their minds, and as we can't, not being consulted in this matter, there's only one thing to do."

"Skip?"

"Exactly, Harry. That's the only way of stopping the ceremony."

"I propose we go to-night," remarked Harry.

"Yes, why not?"

"Look!"

The Hatter pointed to two black men and two women who were seated exactly opposite to the miam or leafy hut in which the whites now were.

"Think they're watching us, Hatter?"

"I don't think, Harry, I know."

"They may go away."

"They will when it's daylight."

"So we're prisoners?"

"Just as much as if we were behind the bars."

"Well, men have broken out of prison, so shall we."

"No harm in trying, Harry, only be careful."

"Why?"

"If we fail in the attempt they may kill us, eh, Jacky?"

"Yes, yes. If white men try run away black men kill them."

"That settles it," replied Joe, calmly.

And Joe threw himself down on the grass as cool as possible, and commenced to eat some wild raspberries he had picked.

"By gosh! you take the cake."

"I'm all right, Hatter. What's the good of worrying yourself? Things'll come right."

And Harry joined his chum.

"Miss Rose," said the Hatter, solemnly, taking her hand, "I'm a rough man, I know, but I'm dead straight, and no one can say I'm not. See here, my dear, I'll save you from these blacks or I'll throw my life away in trying. More than that a man can't do, can he?"

"You are a brave man, Hatter."

"No, no, only a——"

But whatever the Hatter was about to say was lost forever, for Joe shouted out these words:

"At twelve o'clock exactly we start. I shall be very much amazed if you're not all ready."

"Sure, Hatter."

"Going to fly?"

"No, wings haven't grown yet."

"They will some day, Joe."

"Certainly, Harry. I'm so good."

"Ha! ha!"

"Anyway, if I'm not good myself I've made somebody feel good. That's the first time you've laughed to-day, Rose."

"I couldn't help it, you're so silly."

"And this is gratitude! Never mind," said Joe, rising and going to the back of the miam. "I will save you all in spite of yourselves."

Joe picked up a large two-gallon jar which they had found on one of the camels.

"That's whisky, my lad!" cried the Hatter hastily.

"Guess I know that. Shouldn't want it if 'twas water."

"The moon's struck him!" cried Harry.

"The moon doesn't rise till one. That's the reason I said twelve."

Without another word, Joe stepped out of the miam into the small inclosure that surrounded it. Then, when he had reached the gateway he paused and sat down, still having the jar with him. Raising it to his lips he took what appeared to be a good pull at the whisky and then set the jar down before him.

"He'll be in a fearful state in a few minutes."

"It's a shame, Harry, to let him go on so. Some one ought to stop him."

"I will."

"Sit where you are!" cried the Hatter, putting out a restraining hand.

"Why?"

"No particular reason. Well, just to oblige me, if that's sufficient."

One of the two black men seated opposite the door of the miam came over rather eagerly and smacked his lips.

"You want some?" asked Joe.

The black spoke no English, but he seemed to understand, for he laughed and opened his mouth, and imitated the act of swallowing.

"Well, try it."

The black seized the jar greedily.

"Hope he'll bathe in the fluid," murmured Joe.

"Ah! Ugh!" cried the man a minute later as he coughed violently and seemed to be choking. The fiery spirit had taken his breath away. But he returned to the charge with eagerness, this time drinking more than half a pint of whisky without flinching. Joe took the jar away from him, fearing he might carry it off, and the man slunk back to his companions.

They had been watching him closely, and after looking all around the camp to see that they were not observed they came in a body to the door of the miam.

"Ladies first," said Joe, presenting the jar to the older of the two women.

She showed by her performance that the first black was quite a novice in the art of drinking compared to herself. As well as could be judged from the time she kept the jar at her lips, she must have swallowed more than a pint of its contents.

"Try your luck, madam," said Joe, politely, handing the jar to the second lady.

Then the second man had his turn, and once

#### CHAPTER XIV.—The Plan of Escape.

"I mean it," repeated Joe a few moments later, noticing the surprised look on each of their faces.

"Oh, you do?"



more the jar went round, each party helping him or herself generously. The liquor was already beginning to take effect, for the drinkers walked back unsteadily to their former position.

"You'll be ready at twelve?" asked Joe, going into the miam with the jar.

"You've saved us!" cried Rose.

"Oh, you've just found that out, have you? The game's not over yet. There's a fellow round at the back. I heard him. He must be served the same way."

Joe cut a way through the boughs that formed the wall of the miam, and sure enough there was the black fellow who had been stationed on guard there. Invited to drink, he accepted the proposal instantly, and took enough to kill an ordinary man.

"That's a good scheme of yours, Joe."

"I think it's not bad, Hatter."

"But there's a lot to do yet."

"I know. We want our horses and camels."

"And we must have them. A tramp through Never Never Land is out of the question. Besides, all our stores are with the animals."

"Say!" cried Harry, rushing in. "Those people are paralyzed. They're lying asleep on the ground."

"See what the fellow at the back is doing."

"He's in the same condition," was Harry's answer, after taking a peep.

"Then we'll tramp," said the Hatter.

Joe went first, then Rose, then Harry, the Hatter bringing up the rear.

"I think we shall do the trick," said the Hatter; "they've eaten so much to-day that they'll all be precious sleepy. There doesn't seem to be any one stirring."

"Ha!"

As Harry uttered this exclamation a man rose up in front of the fugitives. Quick as lightning, Harry threw himself on the man before he could use the spear he carried, and sent him to the ground. Joe jumped on the black and clapped his hand over his mouth to prevent him from raising an alarm, and the Hatter was kneeling down in a moment binding the man's legs and arms together.

"Here, fasten this round his mouth," muttered the Hatter, indicating a scarf he was wearing.

Jacky did this part of the business in a minute.

"Think there are any more of these fellows about?"

"Can't say, Harry. If there are be as quick with them as you were with the last. You saved us beyond a doubt."

"Maybe there are sentries watching the camels."

"Not likely."

"Why?"

"Because, Joe, niggers are scared out of their lives at camels. They were at horses when they first saw them, and if they hadn't wanted us badly as husbands and wives," laughed the Hatter, "they'd have run miles when they saw those camels. The bravest man in the camp won't go near those animals."

And so it proved. The place was quite deserted; the burdens the animals bore were untouched. Not a moment was lost now. Jacky led the way, and in single file the rest followed, Rose, seated on one of the horses, being the only member of the party who rode. Very silently they proceeded

until they were a quarter of a mile from the camp.

"Hurry up now!" cried the Hatter.

"They'll hear us."

"No, they won't. Get on the camels, boys. Keep a good lookout ahead, and let's make all the distance we can before they start."

"Who?"

"The blacks. Great Scott! why, they'll be after us right enough. Don't make any mistake about that, and they'll follow our trail easily enough. The only thing for us to do is to get all the start we can. We may escape if we're two hours ahead of them."

As they rode on very little was said, for everybody, Rose included, was listening intently to find out whether the dreaded blacks were approaching. All at once, just as day was breaking, Harry, who was in advance, brought his camel to a halt. "You'll all want wings now!" he cried. "Don't you think so?"

And their hopes fell as they saw in their pathway a yawning chasm.

## CHAPTER XV.—Jacky's Brave Feat.

"That settles us," said Harry. The others seemed too surprised to say anything for a minute or two.

The Hatter sat himself down at the edge of the chasm, with his legs dangling over the side, and his everlasting pipe between his lips. Rose trembled for his safety, but he assured her there was no danger.

"It's a few hundred feet to keep me from falling over. Joe!"

"Well?"

"Worked out that plan?"

"No. I'm beaten this time."

"And you, Harry?"

"Oh, I've found a way."

"Good!" cried the Hatter, eagerly. "Let's have it."

"It's quite a simple plan. All that's required is that one of us shall get to the other side."

"Young fellow," exclaimed the Hatter, angrily, "this is no time for joking. If that's your only plan you might as well be silent."

"It's nearly twenty feet across," said Joe. "No one can jump it."

"No one's going to try, Joe. Better go back on our trail, even if we do meet the blacks."

Jacky's mode of ending the dispute was a practical one. He wasted no time in argument. He stood up about ten yards from the edge of the chasm. Then suddenly he dashed forward toward the abyss. No one could have stopped him, and to have made an attempt would have been to have made matters worse for the brave native. But they watched him, spellbound. They saw him halt for an instant at the edge of the gulf. Then, with a terrific spring, he leaped across the void. "Done! by thunder!" roared the Hatter.

Jacky had landed on the opposite side, not exactly on his feet, but so that he was able, with his hands and knees, to obtain sufficient support to keep him there.

"The greatest jump I ever saw. Beats the record, Harry."



"Catch this!" cried the Hatter.

"This" was a stout coil of rope partially unwound, which the Hatter threw across to Jacky.

"Now, once that's made fast we can all get across."

"But the horses and camels?"

"Right you are, Joe. I was forgetting them. Say, but it's bad having to lose them."

"Don't see why we should, either."

"How's that?"

"Look here, Hatter, all we have to do is to cut down some wood and make a bridge. How long will that take with three axes at work?"

"Now everything's plain sailing. Make yourself comfortable, Rose."

"But can't I help you? Let me do something."

"Can you climb a tree?" shouted Joe.

"You just see me!" cried Rose, angrily.

"I should like to. Listen, Rose. I wasn't joking. You can do us a good service by getting to one of the higher branches of that tree over there."

"But for what?"

"To keep you out of mischief," exclaimed Harry. "To watch for the coming of the blacks. From the tree you can cover a great distance. Directly you see them, give a shout to warn us. We'll work, you watch."

Rose showed that she required no instructions in the art of climbing trees, and while she was getting to her elevated position, the Hatter and the two boys were already busily at work with their axes, felling great boughs and stripping them of their leaves."

"Two of us work, the third carry the lumber over to the gulch," said Harry. "How does that strike you?"

"Go right ahead, Harry. No one wants to deprive you of the pleasure of hauling these small pieces of wood."

And so Harry had the heaviest part of the work to do, but he labored like a horse, knowing how much depended on his exertions. The two others kept him busy, until now a great pile of lumber stood all around the edge of the chasm. The Hatter was busy with the rope. He tied the ends of two logs to the cord, and Jacky dragged them across. Being fully twenty-five feet long, there was a good margin at either end. When half a dozen logs had been placed in position in this manner, the work was proceeded with much more rapidly, for they used the lumber that had been thrown across as a bridge.

"It's wide enough!" cried Harry.

"Quite. Hurrah! We shall see the Gold Queen after all."

"Now for the cross-pieces, so that the animals can get a foothold."

"The blacks! the blacks!" cried Rose frantically.

"Where? Where?"

"Coming up the hill. Oh! such a lot of them. They're a good many hundred yards away yet, though."

"Come down, Rose, at once!" shouted Joe.

"Hadn't I better stay here, Hatter?"

"No, no, my dear. You've told us all we want to know. Quick! Well, you didn't take long in coming down. Now go across that bridge. It's quite safe."

And the girl lightly stepped over it. The boys

and the Hatter worked furiously with the cross-pieces till they had laid sufficient.

"The horses first!" cried the Hatter.

Each of the boys led one of the trembling animals over, and the Hatter and Jacky, who had returned, were busy with the camels. Up the valley came the shouts of the blacks, and as the last camel stepped off the bridge the tall spears of the natives could be seen above the bushes which grew thickly on each side of the trail.

## CHAPTER XVI.—Harry Is Wounded.

"If they get across it's all over with us," cried Harry.

"Yes, and that's the very reason why they mustn't."

As Joe made this remark he ran with all his speed toward the bridge that had been placed across the chasm. Harry followed at his heels. The natives were now visible, and when they found the fugitives so near they halted, feeling that their capture was certain.

"Oh, why don't Joe and Harry come?" exclaimed Rose. "They'll both be killed!"

The Hatter, to whom she spoke, turned round in great surprise.

"Why, I thought they were with us! Ha!" he said, after a good look. "Why, I see what it is. They're brave lads, and want to prevent those blacks from following us."

"But how can they stop them?"

"By throwing the bridge into the gulch, Rose."

Meanwhile, Harry and Joe were hard at work, and they had already sent a large number of the logs into the abyss. By the time the blacks appeared on the other side of the chasm, the bridge had been tumbled into the gorge.

"Off's the world!" shouted the Hatter.

"Without stopping to say good-by," laughed Joe.

The two boys and the Hatter turned and fled, and not till then did the blacks recover from their panic. Then many of them fairly howled with rage. The Hatter glanced over his shoulder.

"Down!" he cried, quickly.

As he spoke he threw himself flat on the ground, and the two boys, without knowing why, followed his example. In a moment they understood the reason. A shower of spears flew above their heads, but thanks to the Hatter's action, no harm was done by the weapons.

"Now, right ahead for your lives!"

With these words the Hatter dashed ahead at a terrific pace, the two boys following. In a moment there was a cry of pain.

"I'm hit!" cried Harry.

"Don't give way. Your life depends on it."

"It's only a flesh wound. I'm all right."

"Saved!" cried the Hatter, as the corner was turned.

"Not quite," said Joe, "but we can dodge these easily enough."

The boy referred to some spears that were falling almost perpendicularly. The blacks had resorted to this scheme, now they could no longer see the enemy.

"We're out of range altogether now. Let's look at the wound."

"It's a mere nothing."

"But a narrow escape, all the same, Harry."



It's just grazed your shoulder, carrying away a small piece of flesh, and drawing some blood. But that won't hurt you, you've plenty to spare. When we get to the camels we'll dress the wound."

The three fugitives were still running, the talk taking place as they went along.

"There's the camels!" shouted Joe.

"Stop! stop!" cried Harry.

"Stop! not much. You're a fine runner if a little sprint like that tires you."

"Stop!" gasped Harry.

The Hatter, struck by the tone of the lad's voice, turned instantly and then he saw how ghastly pale Harry was.

"Here, this won't do, Joe. Pull up. Harry's knocked out of time by that spear wound.

"Can't you run?"

"I feel dizzy, Joe."

"What's to be done, Hatter?"

"Get him to where the whisky is without delay. That'll pull him round. Can you stand?"

Harry clutched at Joe for support and just managed to keep his feet.

"You take one arm, I'll take the other. Hatter, we'll get him along."

"Unless we carry him, I don't know a better way."

Joe and the Hatter started off with Harry, finding at each step he took how rapidly he was becoming completely helpless. Before they reached the camels they had to carry him. Rose and Jacky were waiting their coming. Rose gave a shriek when she saw Harry borne along.

"He's dead! He's dead! I knew he'd be killed when I wished him good-by."

"It's nothing, Rose. He's got a scratch from a spear, not much bigger than a pin's head."

"Its the excitement and heat that's done it," said the Hatter. "A few drops of whisky down his throat, and some cold water on his face will put him straight."

But somehow the Hatter's prescription did not act as it was expected to. Instead of Harry recovering his senses he seemed to be sinking rapidly. His eyes were closed, his face was as that of a corpse, and there was a convulsive movement of his limbs that was most alarming.

"Poor lad!" said the Hatter. "I don't like his looks."

"Oh, tell me what I can do!" exclaimed Rose, in beseeching tones. "I'd do anything to help him."

"Yes, yes—I know that, my dear, and so would we all, but what can we do?"

Jacky was bending over the boy, examining the wound closely. Suddenly he sprang to his feet with a shriek. The eyes of the black were starting from his head with horror.

"The neilyeri!" he cried.

The Hatter turned even paler than Harry was, and his face looked more ghastly than Jacky's.

"Don't say that, Jacky!" he cried.

"Master, Jacky always tell the truth."

"What does he mean?"

"Joe, it's bad business now. I never suspected it, though I ought to have done so, for I know the horrible devices of these blacks. Joe, old fellow, I'm afraid Harry's going to leave us," said the Hatter, sinking his voice to a whisper and trembling like a leaf. "The spear was poisoned."

"But there must be an antidote?"

"I know none."

Joe's eyes filled with tears. The thought of losing his chum, Harry Hope, was very terrible. Even more so was to see the poor boy stretched on the ground apparently suffering greatly as the poison went through his veins, and to feel how helpless he was to aid him.

Jacky had his lips to the wound now, and was doing his best to suck out the poison. The Hatter shook his head.

"Jacky's a brave fellow," he said, "but it's too late. The stuff's got too much of a start. If we'd known it at once we might have done something."

Rose was bathing Harry's forehead with water, weeping bitterly as she did so.

"And this is my doing," murmured Joe. "But for me he'd never have come. We'd both of us been back in the States by this time."

Suddenly, Jacky having done all he could to the wound, sprang to his feet and plunging into the brush was lost to sight in an instant.

The Hatter, from time to time, gave Harry large drinks of whisky, but no improvement in his condition seemed to take place.

"He won't last much longer," muttered the Hatter.

"Jacky!"

Joe seemed to pin his faith to the black, and gave a joyful cry when he heard him coming back.

"Jacky cure him!" cried the black.

Without ceremony, he forced the Hatter and Joe aside.

"Water!" he cried. "Quick!"

"Here 'tis."

Instantly Jacky threw into the glass of water a quantity of small pink berries, and then with a piece of wood he crushed the berries so that the juice might mix with the water. The fluid now was quite thick, and it had a strong odor.

"Rub with this," said the black, handing Joe a few large, flat leaves.

"The wound?"

"Yes."

Then Jacky opened Harry's mouth and forced his teeth apart, so that he might pour the draught down. It was done after some trouble, and the change was a marvelous one. The rigor of the limbs relaxed quickly, and soon the color of the face began to assume a natural appearance.

"He's either getting better or dying," said the Hatter.

"He live."

"Guess you're right, Jacky."

Rose gave a shout of joy.

"Harry's saved!" she cried. "Look! He's opening his eyes!"

## CHAPTER XVII.—Discovery of Gold.

Harry's recovery put everybody in good spirits again.

"It's the first cure I ever saw," said the Hatter. "I've heard there was something that would save a man, but never believed it."

"Jacky found it."

"There's not many of those berries about, Jacky?"

"No, no."



"Then it's a miracle. Can you go on now, Harry?"

"I think if you'll put me on one of the camels I'll manage to stay there."

The party was on its way again in a few minutes, and Harry gradually recovered from the effects of the poison and the strong medicine that he had taken.

"When do we stop?" he cried, after they had been traveling some hours.

"Soon as we find a place with any water. Why d'you ask? Are you feeling sick again?"

"Not a bit of it. It's a most tremendous gnawing at the stomach I have, and, by jingo! I believe I could eat a horse."

Harry showed them what his appetite was when they camped.

"Shall we meet any more blacks?" asked Joe.

"Who knows? Why?"

"Because, Hatter, if there's many of those poisoned spears flying about and we all get hit, I pity our stores. They won't last twenty-four hours."

That night a careful watch was kept. Harry was allowed to sleep, but Jacky, Joe and the Hatter took it in turns to do sentry duty. When morning came and nothing had been seen of the blacks they all felt that they were safe. For two days they journeyed on across burning deserts, for the most part with huge boulders rising at intervals out of the sand. At one group of rocks a halt was made.

"What's this?" cried Harry, almost immediately, as he directed the attention of his companions to some yellow streaks running along the smooth face of an immense stone.

"Reckon that's the yellow stuff."

"Gold?"

"It's so."

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted Harry.

"What's the excitement?"

"Why, Hatter, we've struck it now."

The Hatter smiled.

"Get some of it out and let me have a look at it."

Harry and Joe went to work vigorously, but they found that with a chilled steel drill and a heavy hammer they were only able to scratch the surface of the rock.

"Why, there's hardly a dent in it!" cried Joe, in disgust. "And the point of the drill flattened in the bargain."

"Give it up. It's only wasting time."

"Shall we try dynamite, Hatter?"

"That's worse; that's wasting precious stuff which we shall want later on when we get into the hills where the Gold Queen is. We couldn't do anything with this rock if you blew great pieces off it. Where's our gold-crushing machine?"

They boys were loath to go, nor did they until they had made a very close examination of every piece of stone in the neighborhood. Rose, who was not troubled with dreams of finding lumps of gold, was the only one who did not feel disappointed.

"I'm glad of it," she said.

"You're glad," cried Joe, indignantly. "That's a nice thing to say. Perhaps you'll not mind telling us what's caused you this pleasure."

"Why, your not being able to get any gold worth having."

"That's cheerful."

"Yes, it's better for you, boys. You see you'll never find the Gold Queen you're searching for, and it's as well to get accustomed to these disappointments."

"So you don't believe in the Gold Queen, Rose?"

"I should think not. Do you?"

"Yes," answered the Hatter, solemnly. "Bet your bottom dollar on that. If I hadn't I'd never have come into such a place as this Never Never Land. It's not exactly the nicest spot on earth."

"Well, I hope you'll be happy when you get it," laughed Rose.

Day after day they journeyed on, the heat getting more intense as they proceeded. Not a living soul was around, and they had quite ceased to think of their old enemies, the blacks.

"What's the matter with Jacky?" asked Joe, one day.

"Guess he's sick."

"Don't think so, Hatter. He acts like a man who has something on his mind."

"Hope that poison he sucked out of my shoulder hasn't hurt him."

"Couldn't, Harry. It does no harm unless it gets in the blood."

"Here, Jacky!" cried the Hatter.

The black came over, not in his usual lively fashion, but with a listless air and drooping head.

"Yes, there is something wrong," muttered the Hatter.

"He must have a dose."

A "dose" meant a drink of whisky. The Hatter was a very sober man, very seldom taking stimulants, but his faith in whisky, regarded as a drug, was great. He seemed to regard it as a remedy for every complaint.

"Now, Jacky," said the Hatter, holding up the bottle, "this is for you."

The black looked solemn and shook his head. The Hatter was astonished, for he knew how crazy the blacks were to get whisky on all occasions.

"Great Scott!" he said. "If he won't have that he must be off his head."

"Jacky no go further."

"What! you'll stay here by yourself?"

"Yes, yes."

"But that won't do. We want you to help us look for the Gold Queen."

At these words Jacky gave a piteous shriek.

"Ha!" cried the Hatter, "now it's all explained, lads. You recollect how Jacky and all the blacks are afraid to venture near the hills where the Gold Queen is supposed to be. He thinks we're getting there, and he's scared."

"I stay here," said Jacky.

"No, no!" cried the two boys.

Rose went up to Jacky and put her hand on him.

"Jacky, you are my friend, are you not?"

Jacky fell at the feet of the girl and began to cover her hands with kisses.

"Very well, you must stay with me. The Gold Queen cannot hurt you as long as I am with you."

Jacky's eye grew brighter.

"You speak true?"

"Jacky," said Rose, indignantly, "how dare you ask such a question? I always speak the truth."

Jacky thought it over a few minutes, then got up solemnly and resumed the journey.

"That's where the women beat us," muttered the Hatter. "Rose did in five minutes more than we could have done in an hour."

Very glad was everybody to reach the camping-



ground for the night. They found an old water-hole, and set to work to dig it out. After much labor they obtained enough water for the camels and horses. All around was a fierce, burning heat, and as the evening closed in the wind rose, but it brought no relief. Every breath of air was intensely hot. Towards midnight a terrific glare roused the Hatter, and instantly he shook the two boys and shouted to Jacky and Rose.

"It's day!" cried Harry. "Look at that red glare. What a sunrise!"

"Sunrise, you call it? That's where you're wrong. Harry. It's a forest fire, and we'd better make tracks. We'll be lucky if we're not all roasted alive!"

#### CHAPTER XVIII.—In the River.

"It's fire!" gasped Joe Rice.

"There's no mistake about that," answered the Hatter.

"We shall die!" cried Rose, wringing her hands. "If we stay here—yes."

Jacky and Harry Hope had made their way to the camels and were trying their hardest to bring them along. But the animals were almost mad with fear, and nothing could be done with them.

"They won't stir!" cried Harry.

"Leave them!"

"To burn?"

"They are loose. Then can escape if they want to."

"Come, Harry!" shouted Joe. "The fire's spreading at a great rate. We must move."

The horses had vanished. The instant they had been unhitched they had started madly across the desert. The boys and the rest of the party lost not a moment now in following their example. It was a race for life with the terrible fiery foe sweeping after them. On they ran, stopping for breath occasionally, and aghast when they saw that the flames were overtaking them.

"How long can you run, Joe?" asked Harry.

"Any length of time, but Rose?"

"That's the trouble, we must carry her. Great Scott! the forest ahead of us is on fire now."

"This way!" shouted the Hatter, noticing the new danger.

Instantly they altered their course, and were now running straight ahead, with the fire on two sides of them. It seemed as if they would soon be in a circle of flame.

"I can't go a step further. Leave me."

"Leave you, Rose!" cried Joe. "No, no!"

Swift as thought, the Hatter bent down. Not a word did he speak, but he took the poor girl from the ground where she had sunk, and went forward as fast as ever, not seeming to notice the burden he bore in his arms. Rose had fainted, and thus was unconscious to all that went on around her. "Poor girl!" said the Hatter. "Well, it's better so. Her death will be easier."

"Death!"

"Yes, Harry, that's what's in store for us. Like brave men we'll go down fighting, but there's no other end."

"If we reach the forest ahead we'll be safe."

"It'll be on fire before we get there."

This seemed only too probable, but they never faltered.

"There's a chance for us!" cried Joe.

"Don't see it"

"Look, Harry. There's a clearing in the trees; the fire may not spread across."

"It will, for sure."

And so it did, but not till after a delay. The check the flames had received was of immense value to the fugitives, and enabled them to reach the belt of trees before they were alight. They beat their way through with the fire sweeping on still. It was so close now that they could feel the heat, and the smoke troubled them very much.

"Hark!"

"I hear nothing."

"It's the wood crackling."

"That must be it, Joe."

"No, no," said Jacky.

"If you know, tell us!" cried Joe, irritably.

"Water!"

"Water! You're dreaming, Jacky."

"No," exclaimed the Hatter, quickly, "Jacky's making no mistake. It's the Never Never River."

"Then we're lost!"

"No, saved."

"But, Hatter, we can't cross it."

"That doesn't matter. Ha! there's the water. Just in time. In with you, lads!"

And as the Hatter said this he dashed into the stream and waded out until he was up to his neck in the water.

"The river stops us, lads, but it stops the fire, too. It's a case of staying where we are till it's burnt out."

Harry and Joe felt doubtful still as to whether they were saved. They feared the heat would be so intense that they would be unable to endure it. They took every precaution, wetting their heads, and only allowing them to show above the water.

"Oh, but it's hot!" said Harry.

"We all die!" moaned Jacky. "We berry foolish to come Never Never Land."

"For once, Jacky, I won't dispute your opinion."

"Say!" shouted Joe, "this sort of thing can't go on. How d'you find yourself. Hatter? I'm a bit rare now, but, by jingo! I'll be cooked to a turn in a few minutes."

"The fire's at its worst now," answered the Hatter. "If we can hold out for half an hour I really believe we'll do."

"Or be done."

Here there was a shout from Jacky.

"I die—I die!" he gasped.

The Hatter looked grave.

"It's impossible to stay. We'll either have to roast or drown."

"There's just one loophole."

"What's that, Joe?"

"You swim, Hatter?"

"Like a fish."

"Very well; so do Harry and Jacky. We must get out from here into the stream and swim about. If we can keep afloat long enough we'll be saved."

"It's clutching at a straw, as folks say, but we must try it."

Instantly they all made for the middle of the stream, the Hatter having by far the heaviest task, as he had to keep Rose from sinking.

"Where am I?" asked the girl, as she opened her eyes. The water and the movement through it revived her.

In a few moments the situation was explained. "It's good of you, Hatter, to have done so much for me. You've saved my life. I won't give you any more trouble."



To the astonishment of everybody she left the Hatter and struck out.

"You can't teach me to swim," she said, with a laugh, and the way in which she went through the water soon calmed any fears her friends might have had.

"But why don't we make for the other side? Try, Harry."

"Just what I'm going to do."

"No, no, stay here, Rose," cried Joe. "Harry will shout to us when he knows what can be done."

Harry disappeared in the darkness. They all listened intently for a cry from him, and it was not long before it came.

"Help! Help!"

"He's in danger."

"He's drowning," said Rose.

"Jacky and I to the rescue," shouted Joe. "Keep Rose with you, Hatter."

Jacky and Joe forced their way through the water at a great rate for some time, and all the while Harry was shouting to them.

"I see you," cried oe.

In a moment he and Jacky had secured Harry and were trying to struggle back. It was a hard fight. The current ran with great swiftness, and there were several eddies and whirlpools which seemed to hold the swimmers in their grasp.

"I knew what would happen," said the Hatter, when they reached him. "You don't suppose I'd have stayed here if I hadn't."

"Well, all right. There's no harm done."

It was a relief to find themselves on their feet again, and to be able to endure the heat without suffering undue torture. Gradually everything cooled, and an hour after daybreak they stepped on to the bank of the stream, all charred and blackened by the fire.

## CHAPTER XIX.—Crossing the Never Never River.

"Well, we're alive," said Joe.

"We must cross the river," said Harry.

"How?"

"Can't say, but we must. We can't make a raft, for there's not a bit of wood to be found."

"Let's walk down stream. We may find some shallow place."

It was the only chance and they took it. Progress was naturally slow owing to the heated state of the ground, and the smoke that still rose from the smoldering wood made traveling unpleasant.

"Here's the best dodge," said Joe, stepping into the stream. "It's cool for the feet anyway."

The others followed his example, going down the river, keeping close to the bank as they did so. The Hatter kept his eyes ahead of him, and presently they heard him give a shout.

"Good news, lads!" he cried.

"How?"

"The fire burnt itself out not far from here. I can see the tops of the trees."

"But we can't live on leaves and wood."

"You bet we can't, Joe, but where there's trees there's lumber for a raft."

"Hurrah!"

The boys went from one extreme to the other. A moment before they were in despair; now they seemed to think their troubles were at an end.

The making of the raft was not a very easy matter. The only rope they had was one that the Hatter had twisted around his waist. But Jacky found plenty of long, clinging plants, and these were used as cords to hold the great pieces of wood together. Would they hold? This question presented itself as they pushed off from shore.

"We may not get to the other side," said Harry, "for the raft may break up. Still, we can get hold of some of the wood, and it may float us across in the end."

However, the raft kept together, and eventually they found themselves on the other side of the Never Never River.

"Any game about?"

"What, here, Joe? Guess there's not a living thing."

"Wrong, Hatter, for once. I can see our horses!"

"By gosh, it's so! How in thunder did they escape the fire? Things do look a bit roiser now."

The boys and the Hatter instantly attracted the attention of the two horses, who were evidently wandering about in search of food. The poor animals came to their masters very quickly. Jacky made a rush for them. At once he produced the billy in which he made tea. Harry had set skilfully to work, with Rose's assistance, to build a fire. There was no lack of material, and very soon they were all sitting down to a meal of hard crackers, washed down with hot tea. When they started again, the whole of the baggage was placed on one horse, and Rose rode the other. Suddenly, as the darkness came on, they noticed Jacky was behaving in a strange manner. His eyes were opened to their widest extent, his mouth was also open, and his hand, which trembled very much, seemed to point at some object.

"She's here!" gasped the black.

"Yes, I'm here, Jacky," laughed Rose.

"She will kill us."

"Let her try, Jacky. I'm ready. But who is she?"

"The Gold Queen."

"Ha! ha! That's a great joke. By jingo! but there is something moving, anyway. Keep quiet, lads. Have your rifles ready, we may want 'em."

Then, while they waited anxiously, slowly a figure came through the darkness toward the fire.

"Who are you, speak!" thundered the Hatter.

The answer was a sound something between a sigh and a moan, and at the same instant the figure, staggering forward, fell close to their feet by the side of the fire.

"A poor, starving black, Jacky," cried Harry, who was nearest to the new arrival and had taken a close look at him.

The poor fellow seemed near his end, and it was some time before he was able to say one word.

"Listen," said Rose, "he's saying something."

She put her ear close to his mouth.

"Go and look after the horses, Jacky," said the girl, quickly, and Jacky hastened away.

"She's there," said the dying man—for he really was dying. "There!"

He pointed to where a range of hills had been visible whilst it was light.

"The yellow woman," said the man, with a shudder. "I saw her."

"Tell us all about it," said Joe. "Have you been searching for the Gold Queen?"

"Yes, yes, and I die."

"Because you sought her?"

"Yes. All die who find the Gold Queen. The



wise man of my tribe said so, but I believed him not. I was proud. I said, 'I have lived much with white people. I know more than the wise man. I will find the Gold Queen.'

"And you found her?"

"Yes, yes."

"Where?" shrieked the Hatter. "Tell us, while you can speak."

Harry raised him.

"She is there," he said, speaking with difficulty. "In those hills. Do not go there. Past the great trees, up a narrow path, under a stone archway. Mercy! Mercy! Ah!"

"He is dead," said Harry, as he slowly laid the corpse down, whilst Rose covered her face with her hands and sobbed.

## CHAPTER XX.—A Great Discovery.

By the time the poor black had been buried, the Hatter talked no more about starting for the hills. In fact, strong man though he was, he gave way at last, and was very soon fast asleep. The others lost no time in following his example. In the morning the boys were more eager than the Hatter. His excitement had not returned. There was no difficulty in finding the range of hills to which the dying black had pointed. It was there before them. They hurried on toward the mountains, traveling for many hours, and forgetting fatigue and even hunger in their fierce desire for gold. At length they came to a place where their further progress seemed to be completely barred. In front of them was a solid wall of rock fifty feet in height, and it looked as if not even a cat could climb it.

"Done! by jingo!" cried the Hatter, savagely, throwing his hat on the ground.

"And all our labor for nothing."

"No good wasting time," said Joe. "We've made a mistake, and we'll get back. The less we talk the better."

"Master!"

It was Jacky shouting.

"Where in thunder is that nigger?"

"Jacky! Jacky!"

"Miss Rose!"

"This beats the deck!" cried the Hatter. "Look!"

Glancing up, to their complete amazement, they saw Jacky standing at the extreme edge of the great wall of rock that towered above them. He had slipped away without being noticed.

"How did he get there?"

"Can't say. One thing's sure, Hatter—where Jacky can go, we can."

Jacky was waving his arms, and they understood that he was indicating to them where the path lay.

They lost no time in going in that direction.

"Right, by Jupiter!" cried the Hatter.

"It's the archway the dead black told us of."

"That's what it is! Now we're all safe!"

The knowledge that they were on the right trail now put heart into everyone, and as the track had become less rough, they went on rapidly. Still, evening came, and the object of their search seemed to be as far off as ever. The time had come to select a camp for the night, and they sought a sheltered spot for the purpose. The moon was shining in all its fullness, and as the boys and

Rose reached a high platform of earth, the rays of the full moon fell on an object which was quite new to them. It seemed to be human in form, and its color was a dull yellow.

## CHAPTER XXI.—A Remarkable Disappearance.

"The Gold Queen!" cried the two boys in tones of the greatest excitement. The Hatter came rushing up furiously. When he saw the glittering object in front of him he became speechless with astonishment.

"It's she!" he cried at length. "Boys' we're made for life!"

The black came along slowly, not showing any of the eagerness that was exhibited by the rest of the party. Suddenly, as he got near, his eyes fell on the golden image. Then he gave a piercing scream that rose wild and shrill and in an instant he had turned quickly round and was running as if for his life. The two boys and the Hatter started in hot pursuit. Rose followed after them, calling to Jacky to come back, and thinking he might pay more attention to her than to the others. But he went on, never answering his pursuers nor stopping once to look back.

"Let him go," said Joe, in disgust, as he came to a halt quite out of breath, whilst the Hatter and Harry drew up panting.

"It's scared him," remarked the Hatter. "Well, let him be. He wouldn't be any good to us in that state."

Slowly they returned, meeting Rose on the way.

"So he wouldn't come back, Hatter?"

"No, Rose. But don't look sad. Jacky won't leave us. Anyway, he'll keep near the horses, so he'll have plenty of food."

"You've jollied us enough, Rose," said Joe, "about our hunt for the Gold Queen. Don't you think you ought to beg all our pardons now?"

"A woman never admits her mistake, Joe," answered Rose, with an air of wisdom.

"You've had your answer, Joe," laughed the Hatter, loudly. "Better leave Rose alone, boys, or you'll get the worst of it."

"Oh, I haven't finished with Rose yet," cried Joe, merrily.

"And, I've a word to say, too," laughed Harry. "Better say 'em then, lads, and have done with it."

"Well, it's just this, Hatter I want Rose to marry me."

"Why, that's exactly what I was going to say," shouted Harry.

"I spoke first, Harry."

"What's that to do with it?"

"Don't mind me, boys," said Rose. "Of course, I've nothing to do with it. Fix it up just to suit yourselves."

"Well, we can afford to marry now, Rose. We're millionaires."

"Where's the money?"

"Why, Rose, the Gold Queen's worth——"

"But where," cried Rose, interrupting him, "is the Gold Queen?"

She stood still as she asked this significant question, and the answer she received was a deep groan from the Hatter and two furious cries of



rage from the boys. The Gold Queen was gone! Yes, there was no doubt of it. Fifteen minutes before they had been looking on the object to obtain which they had traversed burning deserts and encountered a hundred perils. Now they seemed to feel that their toil had been in vain, for the prize, just as they thought it won, was snatched from their grasp.

"Jacky?" said Joe.

"What in thunder d'you mean?"

The Hatter was very mad, or he would never have spoken in such a tone.

"Jacky's taken the Gold Queen."

"Absurd!"

"I don't think so."

Joe was thoughtful a moment.

"He had help," he said at length.

"Help," cried the Hatter, scornfully. "Where from? D'you think blacks drop from the clouds?"

"But he may have had a friend or two dogging our path for weeks."

"Keep your opinions, Joe. I'll keep mine."

"P'rhaps it's the bunip," suggested Rose.

The bunip is a fabled creature, in whose existence every black in Australia believes. It is supposed to be of a very terrible nature, half man, and half reptile.

"Keep that yarn for Jacky," said Joe, angrily.

"Your proposals of marriage are off, boys, now, I suppose," said Rose, teasingly. "I can't marry penniless bushmen."

Joe and Harry were mad now.

"We must find it," cried Joe. "I begin to believe the Hatter's right about Jacky. He could never have skipped with it."

The Hatter was busily engaged in crawling around the foot of the platform upon which the Gold Queen had been.

"Come here, boys."

His manner was mysterious and impressive, and they both wondered what it meant.

"There's been a lot of people here."

"A lot?"

"You bet! If you stoop, you'll see their footprints on the sand."

"Don't waste any more time. Let's make a search all around."

"Guess you're right, Joe."

The two boys and the Hatter moved cautiously keeping their six-shooters in their hands as they did so, and having Rose behind them, so as to protect her from any danger.

"We may have to fight for our lives," whispered Joe.

"We shall, for sure," growled the Hatter, "if you don't keep still."

Not another word was spoken, and the search went on. They followed the footprints they had seen until they came to some large, smooth-surfaced rocks. Across them, as was only natural, the trail was lost, and eventually it was decided to turn back.

"We'll never see the Gold Queen again," muttered Harry, sadly.

"Who knows? Tell you my idea, Hatter."

"Out with it, Joe. You generally have something good to give us."

"We'll stay in hiding."

All the next day they secreted themselves, and then night came again they crept out, with anxious hearts, to watch till morning

## CHAPTER XXII.—Capture of the Gold Queen.

"See!"

Rose's sharp eyes had detected the strange sight first, and instantly she called the attention of the others to it. No one spoke a word, but they kept their looks fixed intently on what was taking place before them. A number of small creatures were coming toward the platform of rocks on which the Gold Queen had been when they had first seen it, and as the moon was shining brightly, everything was perfectly plain to the girl and her companions. Not less than twenty blacks were in view now. The singular fact about them was that they were all dwarfs. There was not one that stood four feet high, and the majority were very much less. Then, when this crowd opened out, another body appeared. The latter were moving slowly. Evidently they were carrying a heavy burden. In a minute all was clear. The dwarfs were bringing the Gold Queen back. Curiosity kept everyone silent. The Gold Queen was placed in its old position. Then, what was no doubt a religious service began. The black dwarfs looked hideous now. They were quite naked, and they had white stripes painted on their bodies, giving them the appearance of being living skeletons. They were frightfully repulsive, with great lips and flat noses. Round and round the Gold Queen they circled, moaning and chanting some words which were not intelligible. Presently the sounds ceased, and they formed in order as if they were about to parade. Whilst they were silent the Hatter slowly uncoiled a long rope he had around his waist and began to make a loop at the end.

"Now for a tragedy, Rose," cried Joe, laughingly.

"I hope not. I don't see any signs of one."

"It's on hand all the same. The rope's all ready and the Hatter about to hang himself."

"Good-by, Hatter," said Harry, gravely.

"Can't you boys be serious? See here, one of you go along. You can move quicker than I can."

"What for?"

"Take this rope."

"Oh! you've changed your mind. You want one of us to do the hanging."

"Keep still. Take this rope and get the loop over the Gold Queen if you can without that little black imp seeing you."

"Let me have it. I'm the man for the job," cried Harry, and before Joe could interfere Harry had left his friends and was crawling toward the Gold Queen.

Joe had his rifle ready now to protect Harry in case he was attacked. Harry was standing up, and even when he did so the image was some distance above him, but he took the loop and threw it at the figure.

"Missed that time!" exclaimed the Hatter.

"He has it!" cried Joe, excitedly. "What's the next move?"

"When Harry gets back you'll see."

The black sentry never stirred. Indeed, it seemed as if during all this time he had been looking in a contrary direction. Harry came back in the same way he had gone without causing the sentry to disturb himself.

"Now hang onto this rope, both of you," said the Hatter.

"What are we going to do?"



"Hang on, I say, and when I give the word, pull. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Then let her have it."

There was a crash, and the golden image came toppling over, falling heavily to the ground. The sentry sprang up. He was so astonished that he never uttered a cry.

"He's staring at the place where the Gold Queen was," said Rose, who was watching him through the bushes.

"Pull for your lives, lad," said the Hatter.

The loop that Harry had thrown around the image held firmly, and though it was quite heavy, being a dead weight, slowly they dragged it toward them.

"One more pull!"

"The Gold Queen is ours!"

And as Joe said this, he and Harry drew it within the bushes behind which they were hiding.

"Now keep as still as mice, and perhaps we shan't be seen."

The Hatter's advice was strictly followed, for much depended on what happened during the next few minutes. Here the black sentry recovered himself. He gave a piercing cry, and in a few minutes were heard the pattering of feet and the murmur of voices. In a moment the whole band of dwarfs burst into view. The sentry spent a few minutes in explaining events to the excited crowd, and then they came on with wild cries, brandishing their spears as they did so. They were looking in every direction for the image. All at once they stopped, and several of them began to point to the bushes behind which the white people were hidden. The Hatter took the bull by the horns. Without a moment's hesitation he stepped out, rifle in hand.

"Glad to see you," he said, coolly; "what's all this row about?"

#### CHAPTER XXIII.—Conclusion.

The boys thought the Hatter was crazy. But he knew well what he was doing. He realized that unless he showed himself promptly the chances were that the blacks would send a shower of spears into the bushes. The blacks were amazed when they saw this one man standing fearlessly before them, and they seemed still more so as Joe and Harry joined him and took up a position on either side.

"What's the row?" asked the Hatter again. One of the natives stepped forward, and held a conversation with the dwarf who seemed to be the chief. The reason was apparent. He was the only man who understood English, and the chief had summoned him to act as spokesman and interpreter.

"You have stolen our god," said the black.

"Not a bit of it," answered the Hatter stoutly. "All we've taken is a great piece of yellow metal worth nothing to you and much to us."

"That is the god we worship."

"Guess you ain't the only folks in the world who worship the yellow stuff."

"You must give it up."

"I reckon not."

"Then we shall take it from you."

The black turned and explained to his tribe the nature of the talk that had taken place.

"The chief says," he remarked a few moments later, "that unless you give us our god he will kill you."

"You tell the chief," cried Joe, "that we laugh at his threats. See!"

Bang! For some reason or other Joe fired his rifle in the air. The black dwarfs were panic-stricken, for never had they seen such a thing before. Many of them ran away; others threw themselves on the ground.

"That fixed them!"

"Right you are, Joe! It's done the trick, I believe, but it was risky all the same."

"Let's clear away with the gold!" cried Harry.

He and Joe rushed behind the bushes, and came forth dragging the Gold Queen with them. The sight of their idol put courage into the black dwarfs, and instantly they recovered from the panic into which they had been thrown.

"By jingo, Harry, they mean mischief!"

"They look ugly."

"Here!" cried Joe to the black interpreter; "you give us some other gold and we'll hand back this. Have you any more of the yellow metal?"

At once a score of natives, as soon as they understood what was wanted, hurried away, and each man, when he returned, was carrying a huge piece of pure gold with him.

"Reckon we ain't rich now," said Joe.

"It'll be a heavy business to carry this stuff. The sooner we make a start the better."

Joe and Harry left the Gold Queen lying neglected now, but the Hatter, whose eyes gleamed with passion placed himself before it.

"I came here for the Gold Queen," he said, fiercely. "and I swear I will have it!"

Then the natives howled like madmen, and massing themselves together, they made a furious rush at the Hatter and the two boys.

"All over now," cried Joe.

But a miracle happened. With wide staring eyes and hands dropped to their sides, the black dwarfs halted. Rose Foster had come out of the bush. The behavior of the natives was extraordinary. They prostrated themselves, and crawled at the girl's feet. Evidently, so far as they were concerned, Rose was a strange and wonderful being.

"You can have the Gold Queen," said the black interpreter.

"Oh! we can?" asked Joe.

"Yes," said the black dwarf, "you can have the Gold Queen. There," he pointed to Rose, "is our new queen, and she will stay here and rule us."

"We cannot leave her behind," said Harry.

"This is a case for diplomacy," observed Joe, quietly.

"Yes," he added, aloud. "She shall remain with you, but you must carry the gold for us till we reach our horses."

The blacks gave a joyful shout.

"And you must leave her with us till then."

This was readily assented to, and the whole party set off, taking with them as much gold as they could carry. Jacky was with the horses, and he started off across the rocks as soon as he saw his friends. Eventually they induced him to come back, and after much talk his terror at the sight of the Gold Queen lessened considerably. All that day the black dwarfs brought gold until the boys saw around them wealth to a fabulous amount. At night the dwarfs watched over Rose whom they now regarded as their queen. They



kept at a considerable distance, but none of them slept.

"Something's got to be done," said the Hatter.

"We must get Rose away."

"Yes, Joe, and without losing the gold."

"Those black fellows won't be easy to fool. There's another thing, we can't carry the gold. Our horses couldn't take a tenth part of it. Have you thought of that, Hatter?"

"Sure. We must bury the gold somewhere, get across to Coolgardie, then fit out an expedition and come back here and fetch the stuff."

"I have it," cried Joe, joyfully. "I know how we can get the best of these blacks. You'll have to help in this, Rose."

"I don't want to hurt them."

"There's no need. We've some drugs in our stores that'll put the whole crowd to sleep. Ask them to drink with you and the thing's done."

The black dwarfs were only too delighted to take the drink that Rose offered them. It consisted of water with a little whisky in it to color it, and a strong-dose of opium in liquid form. One hour after drinking it every black slept. Instantly the whole party set to work. They carried the gold to a distance and buried it in the ground. Then with Rose on one horse, the Gold Queen on the other, and Jacky carrying the stores, they set off. No doubt they were pursued, but they were not overtaken. After incredible hardships and adventures they reached Coolgardie, the famous gold field of West Australia. The first person they met in the town was Uncle Dave.

To organize an expedition and fetch the buried gold was not a difficult matter, and at its conclusion the two boys found themselves possessed of immense wealth. Rose was then told of the terrible fate of her father and brothers, but as she had long suspected it, the news of their death was not such a severe blow as it otherwise would have been. She had relatives in America, and very soon set sail for San Francisco with Uncle Dave, Harry and Joe. The Hatter went back to the bush again, taking Jacky with him. It was the only kind of life for which he was suited. However, he will almost certainly pay a visit to America, for Rose and the two boys have begged him to come over and see the Gold Queen.

Next week's issue will contain "A POOR IRISH BOY; or, FIGHTING HIS OWN WAY."

## INDIAN TRIBE ISOLATED FOR CENTURIES

For five hundred years a tribe of Indians, having no traditions about religion or a hereafter, has dwelt, isolated from outside influences, in the barren lands of Labrador, Canada. The Montagnais, as these Indians are called, believe that they are reincarnated in their grandchildren. While waiting for a bodily abode the spirits of the departed are supposed to be in "the up above," which is a very indefinite place where the spirits rest a while before taking up life again on earth.

Although the Montagnais have no god and no devil in their tribal traditions, they have numerous supernatural beings. There is Tsegabesh, "The Great Man," who, with his son, Tsegabeshis, "The Little Great Man," delights in upsetting the plans of mortals. Atsen is another legendary figure. He is a cannibal and is to be watched for

when one wanders in the woods. Another folk tale of the Montagnais deals with a beautiful siren. Many a hunter, according to this story, has been lured to his death by following this woman. The legends of the tribe assert also that swimmers have been drowned by an evil spirit who dwells under the water. One of the most interesting legends is that which tells of the Memekwegu, or "Narrow Faces," whose countenances are long and thin, almost like a knife. Rocks on the shores of lakes and rivers are the abiding places of the Memekwegu, who fear mortals and, when encountered, hang their heads in shame and hurry away.

Scattered in camps of one or two families each, often as far as two days' journey apart, the Montagnais subsist on the animals they catch by fishing or hunting. Of late years the whole tribe makes an annual trip of hundreds of miles to the nearest Hudson Bay trading post, the only civilization with which they ever come in contact. For two weeks they stay at the post, exchanging their catch of furs for food and ammunition, which they will need during the following year. While the Montagnais are at the trading post, those of them who have married during the year according to tribal customs are remarried by Christian clergymen, and any children born during the year are baptized.

Doctor F. G. Speck, professor of anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, says that the Montagnais were originally members of the Cree tribe and lived much farther south than they do now. They were driven from their lands by the Iroquois, and finally took refuge in the Laurentian Mountains. There their complete seclusion from the world outside resulted in a complete change of their language and customs.

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## NOT SO EASY

Laborer: It's an actor ye are? Sure, you have aisy times.

Actor: Easy, is it? Just you take a leading part in a Russian play, and try to look half frozen in a Siberian snowstorm on a stifling hot July night, and see.

---

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## A LUCKY LAD

—or—

## THE FORTUNE OF TOM WESLEY

By R. T. BENNETT

(A Serial Story)

## CHAPTER XXII.—The Would-Be Assassins Caught

The marshal consulted his watch and saw that no passenger train stopped at that station during the night, so he hurried up to the livery stable and hired two rigs that would carry four people each and started off down to the main road, running parallel with the railroad.

They drove hard, and when they reached the station found the freight train sidetracked there.

On reaching the station the marshal left one of his friends in the rig to hold his team. Then he went around the freight depot and was accosted by two men, who made the inquiry as to whether he could direct them to where they could hire some sort of a team that would take them down to Harlem.

"Well, what will you fellows pay for a team to take you down to Harlem?"

"Anything within reason," was the reply.

"Can you stand ten dollars?" the marshal asked.

"Yes, and would be glad to do it."

"Well, wait here about ten or fifteen minutes and I'll get a team for you."

"All right. Be quick about it."

The marshal then went to where his friends were and told them he had found the men they were in search of.

"Now, just two or three of us will have to do some shooting before we can make prisoners of them; but if possible, I want to capture them and take them back to Hadley without having to do any shooting, so I will take the rig in which I drove down, and drive around to the freight depot where they are waiting for me. Now you fellows had better go around there and be on hand when I drive up. There will be seven of us in all, and just as they are climbing into the rig you fellows jump on them and disarm them, so that they can't do any shooting. Then we will tie them up hard and fast and drive back to Hadley all right."

His friends said that that was just the trick to play on them, so he mounted the seat of the rig and drove off, leaving the other fellows to walk around to the freight depot.

They reached there about the same time that the marshal did, who, when he drove up, said:

"All right, gentlemen; but I had to do some pretty big talking in order to get the stableman to let me have a rig at this time. He happened to know me, or I couldn't have gotten it, as it is against the rules of the keeper to hire vehicles at such an hour."

"All right," said one of the men, and they started to climb up to the seat, when the marshal's

friends suddenly sprang upon them in a body and bore them to the ground before they could make any resistance.

The marshal then leaped down from his seat and took a hand in their capture.

"What does this mean?" asked one of the prisoners.

"Why" returned the sheriff, "we want that lucky dime you took from young Wesley up at Hadley."

"We didn't take it," protested both of them, "for he didn't have it with him."

"How do you know he didn't have it?"

"Because he said that he didn't, and after searching him we found that he didn't have it on his person."

"Oh, you searched him, did you?"

The men refused to answer any more questions, as they saw that they had committed themselves by what they had already said.

"All right," said the marshal. "We found him lying dead on that rock, and a boy gave us a description of you two fellows. I am the town marshal, and I guess I'll have trouble when we get back to town with you, for all the citizens of the place will do their best to swing you up to those trees down there near the old pond. Tom Wesley was about the most popular young man in Hadley."

The two villains were frightened almost out of their wits and offered everything of value they had about their persons if he would let them go, but the marshal shook his head and said that he wasn't that kind of a man; so he bound them hard and fast and then tied to the seat on which they were placed and drove off toward Hadley.

The prisoners begged hard and made desperate efforts to get loose from their seats, but the marshal had made sure in tying them that they could not make their escape.

The party reached Hadley just as the sun was rising and of course the people there were on the lookout for them.

They drove around to the Widow Wesley's place and called for Tom to come out and identify them. Tom was in bed, but he was well enough to get up and come out.

When the prisoners saw him both of them gasped out:

"Thank heavens!" for they had believed up to that time that he was dead.

The prisoners were greatly relieved to find that Tom was not dead.

Tom went back into the house and told his mother that his two assailants had been captured by the town marshal, and she ran upstairs to Evelyn's room to so inform her.

The town marshal then drove around to the sheriff's home, and Tom went along with him to identify the prisoners and make the charge against them of assault, with intent to murder.

Then the sheriff went to the jailer's home and ordered him to lock them up, saying that he would return soon after breakfast with warrants for both of them.

After breakfast Tom paid the town marshal the reward that he and Evelyn had promised, and out of that amount he paid off the friends who had assisted him in the capture.

After that Tom went armed for the purpose of protecting himself from would-be robbers, for the



fortune that he had made since finding the lucky dime was considered marvelous.

Tom went to the chief of police and put in a written application for the right to carry a revolver. The chief of police promptly granted the petition, and the fact soon became known that Tom Wesley had the right to carry concealed weapons, and that he would give a good account of himself if attacked again.

It was expected, from the fact that he was armed, that any but the most reckless villains would be deterred from making an attempt to rob him of his lucky coin.

While waiting for the grand jury to meet Tom one day told his mother that he was going out to try his lucky coin, and she wanted to know what he was going to do.

"I don't know, mother," said he, "but Evelyn and I will take a ride way up in the direction of Farmer Baldwin's and see what he can do for us in the way of either a horse or a cow trade."

His mother told him to be on his guard and not to let any one take advantage of him.

"Don't worry mother, I am well armed, and I guess that nobody would care to run the risk of interfering with me." So he hitched up his two splendid bays, and he and Miss Granger started off up the main road to the Baldwin farm, which was about ten miles out of town.

When they had driven some five or six miles they passed a pasture along the roadside where there were some four or five splendid Jersey cows grazing.

"Oh, Tom," said Evelyn, "there are several of the finest Jersey cows I think I ever saw in my life. Whose place is this, anyway?"

"I don't know," he replied, "but we can drive up to the house and make some inquiries." So they drove about a quarter of a mile further up the road and stopped in front of the gate. "By George," said he, "I believe this is Mr. Crenshaw's place." So he called to a little twelve-year-old boy whom he saw out in the yard, but before the boy could answer Crenshaw himself, his father, came out on the piazza and sung out:

"Hello, Tom! Why don't you get out and come in."

"Oh, that's you, is it, Mr. Crenshaw?" Tom answered.

"Yes." And he came down off the piazza and walked down to the gate.

"Say, Tom, is that Miss Granger with you there?"

"Yes," he replied, and then introduced the farmer to Evelyn.

#### CHATER XXIII.—Tom Makes a Big Trade

"Mr. Crenshaw," said Tom, "I noticed some splendid jersey cows in your pasture just below here, and I want to know if they are yours."

"Yes, Tom, all except two, and they belong to my wife."

"Well, look here," said Tom, "I've often heard that whatever a man's wife owns is his, too."

"Yes, that's the old saying, but it doesn't work in this case. On the contrary, I believe that whatever I own belongs to my wife, too."

"Well, that is just as it ought to be," put in Evelyn, laughing merrily.

Just then a lady's voice was heard inside the house, saying:

"That's just what I say, too," and a moment later Mrs. Crenshaw came out on the piazza, adjusting a lady's hat on her head.

"By George, Mr. Crenshaw, she seems to be in the majority," laughed Tom.

"Oh, yes. She is a match for any two men in this county," and Mrs. Crenshaw came down from the piazza and joined her husband at the gate.

Tom knew her also and promptly proceeded to introduce her to Evelyn, after which the two ladies fell to talking to each other at a rapid rate.

"Mr. Crenshaw, asked Tom, "have you any good Jersey cows you wish to sell?"

"Yes, I have two fine ones that I will sell. They were raised in that pasture, and one of them yields three gallons a day, and the other three and a half gallons, and each one now has her first calf, so you see that one can expect them to live several years longer."

"Put your price on them, said Tom, "and then we'll drive back down there and take a look at them."

Crenshaw put his price on them, and Tom said to Evelyn:

"Won't you please get out and stay here to work a charm on Mrs. Crenshaw while I take her Jim and drive back down the road to see the cattle?"

Evelyn agreed, laughingly, springing out of the rig, and walking back to the house with the farmer's wife.

Crenshaw took a seat in the rig, and Tom drove down the road with him.

Tom liked the looks of the two cows very much and tried to close the trade, but Crenshaw wanted to return to the house and let his wife make the trade.

Tom tried to buy the cows by offering the cash right on the spot, but Crenshaw knew his wife better than Tom did; so when they returned Tom looked at the farmer's wife and said:

"Mrs. Crenshaw, you've got your Jim well trained and no mistake."

"Why do you think so?" she asked.

"Why, because he wouldn't sell me either one of those cows until you first agreed to it." Then he added:

"Well, find out Mr. Crenshaw, if your wife will let the cows go at the price I offered you."

Crenshaw motioned to his wife, and they walked off about thirty steps and had a quiet little consultation.

Both Tom and Evelyn were looking on, but could not hear a word from that distance because the conversation was carried on in such a low tone.

"Tom," said Evelyn, "she won't agree to it."

"How do you know, dear?"

"From the way she shakes her head."

"Well, I happen to know that he is very anxious to sell, for he told Mr. Flynn at his store one day last week that he had two young Jersey cows with their first calves that he wanted to sell, and Mr. Flynn told me about them. Now, the price I offered is the best that he can get anywhere in this county, so I am going to give her the bluff if she refuses to sell at that price," and when Crenshaw and his wife came back Crenshaw said:

(To be continued)



# PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, MARCH 23, 1927.

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## INTERESTING ARTICLES

### HIGHWAY FOR CUBA

A 750-mile concrete highway, costing \$75,896,552, is to be built in Cuba. It will extend from Guane, Pinar del Rio Province, to Santiago de Cuba, practically the entire length of the island.

### A MAN'S LIFE FOR A DOG

Endeavoring to save his dog from death under a Pennsylvania electric train in Atlantic City, George Kovalik, forty-one, was killed. As Kovalik plunged under the gates with arms outstretched, the dog, apparently thinking it was a game, ran to one side. The man stumbled and fell across the rail.

### NEW YORK LEADS IN MOTOR VEHICLES

Motor vehicles in use in the United States now exceed 22,000,000, or one to every five persons. New York leads with 1,818,765. This State now has about half as many outdoor vehicles as all the rest of the world, aside from the United States. California is New York's closest rival, with 1,614,479. Ohio is third, with 1,507,500; Pennsylvania fourth, with 1,483,054. Illinois, Michigan and Texas follow.

### PLENTY AIR IN BEDROOMS

Bedrooms need not be very large but should have plenty of light and air, and should allow beds, dressers, chests of drawers and chairs to be placed without interfering with doors, windows or heating outlets. Cross ventilation is most desirable. It is not best to have bedrooms opening directly into the living room. If possible, entrance should be from a passage or hallway. Ample clothes closets are most necessary particularly in small houses where there is little room for storage.

### MONSTER SHARK TOOTH FOUND IN CALIFORNIA

A shark's tooth more than twice as large as any heretofore known to scientists was unearthed some time ago from the lime pits at Torrance, California. The tooth is five and three-fourths inches long, three inches thick at its heaviest end,

and fully four inches wide at its base. Doctor L. E. Wyman of the Museum of History, after a careful examination of the tooth, declared it was the largest shark's tooth on record.

The immensity and fighting efficiency of the shark which bore this tooth in his jaws can only be grasped when it is understood that a shark has two hundred teeth, arranged in four rows on each side of the jaw and gradually tapering to tiny, daggerlike teeth.

A shark which has a tooth an inch and a half long is considered a monster, and one with a tooth two inches long can generally be counted upon to be twenty-five feet in length of body. As these creatures increase in size their teeth increase proportionately.

The fish which had such a tooth as that found at Torrance was at least sixty feet long, and must have ranked as a dreadnaught among the fighting monsters of the sea. Despite the passage of the thousands of years since he darted around in the water, his immense tooth, beautifully petrified, is as easy to classify as the tooth from a shark which had come to its death only recently.

## LAUGHS

### THE BATHING MASTER'S DUTIES

Old Lady: Are you here to teach people to swim?

Bathing Master: No, mum; I'm here to keep swimmers from getting drowned.

### A SEASIDE ROMANCE

Miss Hatchetface (at the seaside): How can I ever repay you for saving my life?

Gallant Rescuer: Marry somebody else.

### RURAL ADVANTAGES

Stranger: - understand that there has never been a court case in this neighborhood. The people here must be very peaceable.

Farmed Wayback: 'Tain't that; but you see, the squire lives so far away that by the time we git there we forgit what we was quarrelin' about.

### NOT MERE MONEY

He (bitterly): Your answer would be different if I were rich enough to shower you with golden eagles.

She: It might be different, possibly, if you should cover me so completely that I couldn't see.

### A GREAT HELP

Jim: Say, Fred, old boy, I'm looking for some friend who will loan me ten dollars. Come, now—can't you be of assistance?

Fred: Certainly.

"Thank you ever so much."

"Yes, it's going to rain, and if you'll step over to my office, I'll lend you one of your umbrellas so you won't get wet while you're looking."

### WHY HE WENT

Employer: Yesterday you asked for a day off to get married, yet I saw you in the afternoon coming from the races.

Clerk: Ye-e-s, sir. I—I was trying to win money enough to pay the preacher, sir.



## TWO BRAVE DEEDS

In the year 1863, during the war of the rebellion, many of the ports in the Southern States were blockaded by the Federal war vessels to prevent the shipping of cotton and other commodities to England, where it commanded a good price.

The owners of English ships, knowing the necessity of keeping well supplied with cotton in order that the home mills might not be shut down, made voyages to the South with the express purpose of running the blockade, taking in a supply of such goods as the army needed, and getting out again with a ship load of cotton.

At this juncture, during the summer of 1863, the United States frigate *Georgetown*, under the command of Captain Cowles, was sent to watch the mouth of a little river below Savannah, where the contraband traffic was reputed to be rapidly increasing.

On board the *Georgetown* was a young fellow named Jack Prince, a midshipman, and as bright a boy as you could wish—thoroughly devoted to his country, prompt in obedience to the orders of his superiors, and ready to seize every opportunity for advancement.

Captain Cowles and his officers had often noticed the young middy, and had been attracted by his bright and prompt attendance to duty, but upon the arrival of the frigate off the suspected coast, an accident happened which brought him into greater prominence, and gave him the very opportunity for which he had so long been looking, the chance to show himself at his best.

The ship was rounding to, so as to come up closer in shore, when there came a sudden flaw of wind, there was a sharp, snapping sound, and one of the main braces parted and flew up in the air.

A young sailor lad, not so old as Jack, was ascending the rigging at that moment, and had stepped upon the rail, whence it was an easy jump to the deck.

The flying rope struck the boy on the chest, the vessel keeled to one side, and in another moment there was a splash in the water.

"Boy overboard!" cried one of the sailors, in lusty tones.

"It's young Tom Hawks, and he can't swim a stroke," added another.

Jack Prince had not waited to hear this, but had thrown off his jacket and was overboard in an instant.

One splash followed the other in quick succession, and hardly before Tom Hawks had ceased going down, Jack had seized him and was bringing him to the surface.

"Don't try to grab me, my boy," he said quietly, but in a firm tone, as they reached the air. "It's all right. You can't drown while I'm here, and there'll be a boat here presently."

Despite the formalities necessary to be gone through with in lowering a boat from a man-of-war, the two boys did not have to wait long before they were taken from the water, Tom first, and then the young middy.

"If you hadn't come after me when you did," said Tom, "I'd ha' been drowned, and all for not

knowin' how to swim. I'll learn just as soon as I can after this."

"I did not know you could not swim, at first," said Jack. "I thought that you were hurt."

"Well, I won't forget you, anyhow," muttered Tom in grateful tones.

The entire party was soon on board, and Jack went below to change his wet clothing, touching forehead with his hand as he passed the commander, his cap having fallen to the deck when he made his plunge.

Captain Cowles said nothing to the midshipman, but when he went below, soon afterwards, he said to his first officer, Lieutenant Bruff:

"Young Prince is in your watch, I believe, lieutenant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good sort of a fellow, is he not?"

"Very capable, sir."

"I may have something for him to do to-night, then," said the captain musingly. "A young fellow who will act so promptly in time of danger is just the sort of person I want."

"I can recommend him, sir," returned Lieutenant Bruff, "whatever the errand is."

"I am sure of that," said the commander musingly, as he returned on deck.

Shortly after this a boat came out from shore, rowed by a solitary negro, who pulled straight for the ship.

The vessel was hove to, and in a few minutes the boat ran alongside and the negro said:

"Tell de cap'n I done want to see him, Marse Sailorman."

Captain Cowles was on the quarter-deck, and at once gave orders to have the negro taken on board.

"Well, if that ain't the queerest Dick I ever see," muttered Jim Bight.

The negro had actually gone into the cabin with the commander, much to the disgust of the sailors.

However, the man remained in the cabin for some time, and when he came out the commander was with him.

"That will be all right, and we are much obliged for your information," Tom Hawks heard the commander say to the man as he dropped over the side into his boat.

Tom had changed his wet garments, and was now on duty once more, as was also Jack Prince, toward whom the commander now turned a scrutinizing glance as he ascended the quarter-deck.

"Midshipman Prince!" said the captain, after a pause.

"Yes, sir," said Jack, touching his cap.

"Ask Lieutenant Bruff to step this way, and then come here yourself."

A few minutes afterward the midshipman stood upon the quarter-deck, cap in hand, confronted by the commander and the first officer.

"Midshipman Prince," said the captain, "I am pleased at your prompt action in saving the life of one of the humblest of my crew."

"I only did what I thought was right, sir," said Jack quietly, although he blushed with pleasure at this recognition of his act.

"That's what I believe you will always do, sir, what is right," said the captain, "and for that reason I have determined to send you upon an errand of the utmost importance this very night."

Jack bowed, while his heart beat wildly at the



thought of at last doing something to distinguish himself.

"Say nothing of this to any one," continued the commander. "When I want you I will send for you. You may go now, sir."

Just after dark he was sent for to go into the cabin, where he found the captain and Lieutenant Bruff, seated before a table strewn with papers.

"Mr. Prince," said the commander, "I told you this afternoon that I had business of importance for you. I will now tell you what it is.

"The man who came aboard gave information of an English ship, which is going to attempt to run the blockade this very night, he thinks, with a cargo of cotton, and I mean to stop him.

"I want you to take a boat and go up this river, ascertain the position of the vessel, and if her captain really means to go out to-night, and then return to the ship."

"I'll do my best, sir," said Jack, feeling greatly elated at having been deemed worthy to be intrusted with so important a mission.

An hour later a boat was quietly lowered from the sides, and Jack took his seat in the stern, after a picked crew had preceded him.

As the men were about to take their places, Tom Hawks had slipped up to Jack and quietly said:

"Can't I go, sir? You done me a good turn this afternoon, and mebbly I can do you one to-night. Don't say no, sir, for I'd do anything for you."

"Down you go, Tom," said Jack, quietly. "Take your place up forward. I think I shall want you there."

The boy quickly obeyed, and in a few minutes the boat left the ship's side and was swallowed up in the darkness, the night having grown as black as ink since Jack's interview with the captain.

A thick darkness hung all about them, but Jack had laid his course properly before setting out, and Tom was ready to give warning were any danger to arise.

Suddenly the least glimmer of light was seen ahead of them—instantly disappearing.

"Light ahead on the left, sir," he whispered, and the report was sent on to Jack, who turned the boat's head a trifle and told the men to make even less noise with their oars than before, although the sound had been scarcely perceptible.

Jack had been told to look out for snags and other obstructions, and Tom, both listening and watching with every sense alert, took care to obey these instructions and give notice of the slightest obstacle.

"Starboard, a little," he presently whispered, as a sound in the water ahead of him told him that they were approaching a rock.

The boat glided to one side of the obstruction, and then proceeded for some little time without hindrance.

Suddenly, however, just as Tom gave a warning of a snag ahead, a light flashed out and a boat full of armed men was seen bearing down upon them, while behind could be seen the outlines of a good-sized vessel moving downstream under half sail.

"There they are—don't let them get away!" cried a voice, and the men in the strange boat bent to their oars with renewed efforts to prevent the escape of Jack and his party.

Tom instantly gave a shout and sprang up in the boat, leaping overboard at the next instant.

The men in the strange boat instantly fired upon him, and in the flash of light that followed his body was seen to sink below the surface.

One of the sailors dropped his oar, dove his arm deep into the water, and seized the boy by the collar of his shirt before he had sunk beyond reach and drew his head above the surface.

"Fire!" cried Jack, divining Tom's intention, and a volley rang out, showing the position of the other boat and the vessel beyond.

None of his men had been hit, as the young sailor had drawn all the fire upon himself, but the helmsman of the other party received a wound which caused him to lose his hold upon the tiller, and in an instant the boat was dashed against an enormous tree root protruding above the water, and was held fast.

"Back oars all!" hissed Jack, and his boat at once backed away, stalwart Jim Bight lifting the unconscious Tom over the gunwale upon one of the thwart.

Mingled imprecations and cries of warning were heard from the other boat, and then came a crash for which there was but one explanation.

In the confusion of the moment, the pilot on board the blockade runner had shifted his helm too much, and at the next instant the vessel had crashed into the snagged boat, crushing her to pieces and throwing her occupants into the water.

In a few moments more Jack had reached the mouth of the river and sent up a rocket, indicating his presence to those on board the Georgetown.

The frigate quickly approached to within a safe distance, when half a dozen boats, all well manned, were lowered and sent to the aid of the young midshipman.

Then a score of torches lighted up the scene, and a descent was made upon the blockade runner, which was speedily captured, despite the resistance of her crew, many of whom finally leaped into the river and swam ashore.

Tom Hawks was found to be still alive and was taken on board the frigate, where the ship's surgeon pronounced him to be not fatally wounded, and prophesied that with care he would soon recover.

"Why did you draw the enemy's fire upon you, my boy?" asked Jack, the next morning, when the blockade runner had been towed alongside the Georgetown.

"So's you wouldn't get it," replied Tom, "and so's the boys on the ship would know we was hard pressed and would come to help us. You done me a good turn yesterday, and I told you I'd do something for you some day."

Jack never forgot what Tom had done for him, and his own progress was rapid from that time until, at the close of the war, he retired with the rank of lieutenant, Tom being a boatswain, and as devoted to him as a dog.

Jack has long since retired from active life, and Tom is now the captain of a merchant vessel, and in the enjoyment of a snug fortune, both being firm friends and often meeting to talk over old times, and especially that adventure with the blockade runners, which bound them together as friends for the rest of their lives.



## CURRENT NEWS

### FROZEN LOCOMOTIVE WHISTLE SHRIEKS FOR MILES

The Twentieth Century Limited, of the New York Central, westbound, from Boston, was subjected to a freak of the intense cold the other day. The whistle of the locomotive was screeching continuously as the train reached Pittsfield. Inquiry revealed it had been blowing all the way from Springfield, a distance of fifty-four miles, apparently frozen open. Attempts to locate the trouble here failed and the big locomotive plowed off into the mountains still screeching.

### PICTURES ARE TAKEN OF VOICE MECHANISM

Photographing of the interior human voice mechanism during normal speech has been accomplished for the first time at Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, by Professor G. Oscar Russess, of the university phonetics laboratory, it was revealed recently.

Professor Russell declared he is convinced, as a result of the first photographs, that many previously conceived theories regarding the voice will have to be modified, if not revolutionized. Unlocking of vocal secrets which may be expected to follow, he observed, may be felt in the radio industry, telephone, phonograph making, voice culture, teaching of languages, and teaching deaf mutes to speak.

Evidence is given in the first photographs, Professor Russell declared, that the hyoid bone, at the base of the tongue, and the so-called false vocal cords, contrary to accepted belief, aid in producing the vowel sounds; that certain theories of voice teaching have been based on false premises, and that previous theories of what part the vocal cords play and what the function of the vocal cavities is, must be modified.

The photographs were obtained with a full-sized camera, lined to a tube about the size of a lead pencil, arranged to conform to the contour of the mouth, and containing mirrors, lenses and prisms and a lighting device. The tube was devised by Professor Russess, and the lighting was the work of Professor Raymond Weeks, of Columbus University.

### HUNTING MOOSE WITH A BIRCH-BARK HORN

In addition to the usual way of hunting game some hunters practice a custom known as "calling." This means that the hunter, in concealment, imitates the call of the female, and his call usually entices the male of the species within shooting distance. Certain sounds can be imitated vocally, but for most calling an instrument of some sort is required. There are a number of calling instruments on the market.

Calling, however, is chiefly applied to big game, and the American and Canadian hunters use a birch-bark horn to inveigle the lordly moose into an range. At first thought it might be inferred that the practice of calling is unsportsmanlike.

But, when a big bull moose looms up, almost on top of the hidden hunters, he is apt to turn "rusty" at the sight of two humans. There are less dangerous things to encounter than the horns and hoofs of a mad moose.

The instrument used for calling moose is a strip of birch bark, rolled up into a cone like a megaphone. The best time for calling is early morning or evening. Windless days are best, for a bull moose, coming to the call, uses his nose, and the slightest whiff of man scent drives him to seek safety. The great art of calling is not to overdo it.

First the birch horn sounds a seductive call of "Who-ah! Who-ah!" into the stillness; then the bull answers with a deep-toned "Bwa-bwa-bwa." Next there is a period of silence, followed only by the sound of breaking brush. After twenty minutes another call is sounded. Still the bull does not show himself, but two hundred yards off the brush rattles. Then the hunter fills the horn with water from the pool beside his hiding place and lets it trickle back with a slight splashing sound. This turns the trick; out comes the moose, a hundred and fifty yards or so away, and up goes the hunter's rifle.

### RATTLER BESTS BULL SNAKE

A novel sporting event was some time ago staged at Kendrick, Idaho, an encounter between a rattler and a bull snake. For months Kendrick men have been disputing as to which could win. The interest was started by the report of some section men on the Northern Pacific who told of seeing a battle to the death between two large snakes of these breeds, in which the bull snake won by crushing the rattler to death.

Backers of the rattler challenged the supporters of the bull. Men were sent into the country to secure the snakes. Two bulls, one about three feet long and the other six feet long, were secured, together with a three-foot rattler. A ring was formed outside the town, and the men took the snakes to the place for the contest. The rattler was deposited into the ring, and it promptly coiled prepared to strike. The smaller bull snake was then turned into the ring and "shooed" toward the rattler. The spectators craned their necks. The bull snake crawled up to its antagonist, and the rattlesnake evinced every sign of being delighted with his company. The two snuggled up together like two lost friends. The crowd was disgusted.

The big bull snake was then introduced into the arena, and the attitude of the rattler changed from the friendliness shown toward the smaller bull snake to one of venom. His forked tongue shot out, and his head bobbed from side to side. The big bull approached, and the excitement grew intense. When the big bull snake got within striking distance of the rattler the latter struck viciously, burying his fangs in the thick flesh of the bull snake. The bull retreated. He was driven back to the rattler, which again sank his fangs, bringing blood, but the bull snake would not fight. The rattler was killed by the men, and the bull snakes were released.



## TIMELY TOPICS

### ELECTRICITY TO WARM FEET OF BERLIN TRAFFIC OFFICERS

There will be no more cold feet for Berlin traffic cops this winter if a system of artificial hot bags at street intersections find general adoption. The scheme consists of installing electric heating devices in the heavy glass-encased safety islands upon which cops stand during the day and which are illuminated from the inside with red lights at night.

Traffic officers at the few intersections where the device is in use are pleased with the idea. They say it is like standing on top of a warm stove.

### SURVIVES SNAKE TEST, BUT NOT POISON

While conducting a series of religious meetings at Pagoda, Texas, George Bishop, a preacher of an unusual sect, seized a rattlesnake and wrapped it around his body as evidence of his belief that no harm could come to one who had absolute faith in the Creator. The snake did him no injury.

A Texas boy in the congregation who had seen rattlesnakes many times was not satisfied with the test. In order to try further the alleged immunity of the preacher the boy handed him a vial of poison, telling him what it was. Bishop drank the poison and died in a few minutes.

### UTAH'S LOFTY MOUNTAINS

The State of Utah has many lofty mountain peaks, and six of them, according to a recent report of the United States geological survey, rise more than thirteen thousand feet above sea level, and nearly sixty mountain peaks in the State rise above twelve thousand feet. King's Peak is the highest mountain in Utah, and it has an elevation of thirteen thousand four hundred and ninety-eight feet. Mount Emmons and Gilbert Peak are the next highest mountain elevations, reaching altitudes of thirteen thousand four hundred and twenty-two feet, respectively.

### "OUR FRIEND, THE SNAKE"

In a report made some time ago by Doctor Ditmars, of the Bronx Zoo, New York City, there are some very interesting facts about the snake which are worth remembering by those of us who are inclined to look upon this reptile as a detriment. Doctor Ditmars says the snake is an asset, and a decidedly valuable one.

Of course there are many kinds of snakes, poisonous and non-poisonous. In the United States the poisonous species are to be found in every State in the Union, the rattlesnake and the copperhead being the most deadly. Though it is generally thought that the dangerous part of the poisonous snake is the forked tongue, the tongue has nothing at all to do with the poison. The fangs, which are up against the roof of the mouth and folded back when not being used, contain the poison. It is interesting to know

that there are on the average just two fatal snake bites a year in the United States, and that no snake bite, if treated in time, need prove fatal. This has been demonstrated very definitely in South America, in Africa, and in India, where serums and antitoxins, the result of comparatively recent experiments, are saving thousands of lives each year. In these countries the death toll from snake bite is high, but it is hoped that within the next few years it will be materially lowered, and that within ten years it will approach our own level of fatalities.

Of the non-poisonous snakes, the so-called king snake should be regarded as one of man's best friends. Not only does it destroy poisonous snakes remaining immune from the poison itself, but it destroys rodents as well. In the United States alone two hundred million dollars' worth of commodities are destroyed annually by rats. Then there is the deadly bubonic plague, which can be carried only by rats. To save this enormous loss of commodities, and to prevent the spread of disease, the rat must be wiped out, and nothing is better for the purpose than certain types of the non-poisonous snakes. It is a national duty to protect the snakes which are nonpoisonous and destroyers of rats. If necessary, we should have legislation, as there now is in India and South America, for the protection of these friends of man.

### THE WAR ON WOLVES AND COYOTES

Although the coyote, the small cousin to the huge timber wolf, still makes its mournful cries echo across the prairie, its bigger cousin is growing less plentiful. For some time the government has been waging war on these night prowlers, saving thousands of dollars to stockmen.

The wolf has a great deal of cunning and matches his wits against that of man. It learns from experience. If one of the pack is found dead from poisoning the rest realize that a piece of meat left temptingly near had the deadly stuff—arsenic usually—in it, and the next piece of meat lying on the ground is passed by. But the man enemy is a match for this; he goes one better, and next places bait on a log with a trap concealed near by. And the wolf gets caught in this.

Some of the individual wolves in the Oregon forests have attained such a reputation for cunning that they have acquired the dignity of a name; apparently they defy all measures taken for their capture. They knew that a restrained appetite goes a long way to insuring safety. But the government's exterminators have studied all the habits of these wolves and can trace and kill particular animals.

A wolf which had been a resident of the vicinity of Custer, South Dakota, for six or seven years had killed during that time as much as twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of cattle. He wasn't clever enough to evade the man enemy forever, and a lucky shot finished his marauding days.

When in a tight hole a wolf will run out into the open to escape. A coyote will not do this. It trusts to its color to keep its hiding place a secret. The wolf has no faith in color.



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